SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 487. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 30TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

FANCY

often plays strange pranks with some of us. There are excellent people who fancy the earth is flat, and who decline to accept evidence to the contrary. Others fancy they can run this journal better than any able editor of ancient or modern times. Some folks fancy they are so strong they can never fall ill. Others fancy they are so ill they can never get well. The latter class is, in large part, composed of sufferers from prolonged nervous dyspepsia, with all its insidious, ever-increasing troubles. Such people are weighed down by a sense of hopelessness. They are the victims of lassitude and headache, aye, and of heartache, too, for they can enjoy little, and envy the buoyancy of their more robust fellows. In short, they endure a life of misery,

MEETING

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Short Stories

Edited by C. Arthur Pearson.

No. 487.] For the Week ending April 30th, 1898. [One Penny.

Love and Hypnotism.

I began my artistic career by hiring a room in an old building that had an extension at the back. At the top of the spacious extension were a number of rooms let out to young artists; the remainder of the edifice —both the front and the back buildings—was occupied by tailors and other small tradesmen, none of whom stopped very long, owing to the pranks of the knight of the brush.

Returning to my den the night following my instalment, I was swinging carelessly up the stairs, when something bright in the light of the gas jet caught my eye, and I stopped short, simply petrified with astonishment. There, curling down the banisters within six feet of my nose, was a huge serpent, its head raised, its beady little eyes glittering, and its forked tongue darting in and out of its mouth.

I think it was ten seconds before I recovered—it seemed at least ten minutes. Then I made a wild spring backwards, my hat falling into my arms as I did so. I landed somehow on my feet, and seizing my hat, a hard felt one, I flung it with all my force at the brute's head, and without waiting to see if it had taken effect, rushed howling down the passage.

Heavens! I never thought that passage was so long. I expected every minute to feel the reptile seize me. How I got down to the front door without breaking my neck I don't know, but I did, and out into the street; and, as luck would have it, right into the arms of a big Irish policeman, one of the very finest.

"An' fwat is the matter wid ye?"

"A serpent," I gasped, "loose on the stairs!"

"A sarpint, is it? Is that all?"

"Is that all! Why, man, it might have killed me!"

"Na, na! You'll get over it all right. Where do ye live?"

"Look here, policeman, no nonsense. I'm not squiffy, I'm an artist. My studio is up on the top floor of the extension, and I tell you there is a big snake—looks like a boa constrictor or a python to me—on the banisters——"

"Where's yer hat?"

"I threw it at him just as he was going to seize me."

So we went up again, the constable first, very cautiously. Arriving at the foot of the stairs we found my hat but no snake.

"Well, where is he?"

"How do I know? Do you suppose he left me his card? Of course he's sneaking round here somewhere."

Well, we hunted every nook and cranny, examined even the walls and ceilings, but all in vain. He had gone as mysteriously as he came.

The policeman took off his helmet, mopped his brow, then said: "Now, get along wid ye. Where was yez last night?"

"At the theatre."

"Theyater, no, no! Yer a young sprig, but yer got 'em sure."

"Got what?"

"Blue devils."

I was about to make an indignant denial, when a suppressed titter reached our ears from the floor above, and looking up we saw half a dozen heads peering down at us. When they saw they were discovered the storm broke: they howled and shrieked with laughter, stamping and shouting up and down the corridor. Recognising that in some manner we had been made the victims of a practical joke, we went up. Dennis haughtily, I in a shamefaced manner.

"Bedad! Look at that now! Put down that sarpint, or Oi'le arrest ivry mither's son of yez fur carrying deadly weapons."

"What rot! Here, have a drink," and, advancing, came the man who I afterwards knew as Arthur Melton —in one hand a whisky bottle and in the other the neck of a huge snake, whose body was coiled in loose folds round him.

While Dennis was paying his respects to the bottle, the others standing round still grinning, the young fellow advanced smiling towards me, and when he did so all the little anger I still felt left me.

"I say, old chap, it was rough, I know, and we apologise. But, Great Scott, I wouldn't have missed it for a tenner!"

Here they all exploded again, while Dennis and I grinned sheepishly. After the officer had left, formal

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introductions took place, and I'm afraid they had something to do with my headache the next day.

The ice having been thus broken, I found the men about me the best natured fellows imaginable, and during the next few days one or another of them was in and out of my den continually, helping me in the disposition of the furniture and things, and taking as much interest in getting the right artistic effect as I myself.

But for the finishing touches the concensus of opinion appeared to be that I must have Bessie. Upon inquiry I found that she was a model, who, during her leisure, devoted herself to the endless wants of the "boys," stitching on buttons, keeping a check on the laundry, in fact, acting as a kind of general housekeeper.

I expected to see something ancient, but was agreeably surprised when one of the fellows brought a tall, slender girl to my room, and introduced her as Bessie. She could hardly have been more than nineteen, and with her pretty face and graceful ways she would have seemed far more at home in a father's house entertaining her guests, than living and chumming with a band of vagabonds like us. However, as she seemed to have no doubts as to the propriety and desirability of her position, I naturally fell in with the rest and soon began to regard her as a most necessary and important part of the "rookery."

Dressed in a dainty little costume, and looking as sweet and charming as nature and art could make her, she would beard the most irascible art editor in his den, and she rarely came back without having disposed of one or two at least of the drawings intrusted to her.

She had her own little private room, the walls of which were covered with the choicest bits of the boys' work, and—well, if she were good to them, they showed their appreciation of her by the thousand little attentions that help to make a woman's life pleasant, and she was always treated with the greatest respect.

I believe we were all a little smitten, and it must be pretty hard for a girl to keep the peace between ten geniuses who persist in admiring her, especially if she possibly have a secret inclination towards one of them, which, in common justice to the rest, she would have to hide. If she had any such inclination she kept it well hidden.

One night, about two weeks after I got permanently settled and before I had got really intimate with my surroundings, I was awakened by the most unearthly howls, and jumping out of bed, stood shivering in my pyjamas, bewildered, and trying to make out what it was all about. Hearing doors open, and voices in the passage, I opened mine, and found several of the fellows staring about inquiringly; finally we traced the row to Melton's room, and shouted to him through the door to know what was the matter.

We heard him floundering round inside, and presently his voice sounded.

"Quick, boys, up on the roof; it's a burglar! I can't get out; all the snakes are loose and seem to have gone clean daft!"

We hurried to the trap door in the roof, but by the time we got up our visitor had made good his escape. The flat roof was covered with snow, and his footprints showed clear enough, leading to and from Melton's skylight.

We prowled about for a few minutes, but there was no signs of the fugitive, and were just going below again when the gas, shining through the skylight, attracted one of the men, and he went and peered down.

"Come here, quick! If that don't beat Dante I'm a Dutchman," he cried.

We all crowded round, and I, at least, forgot all about my slippered feet in the snow, so great was my interest at the sight inside.

In the middle of the floor stood Melton, some kind of a woollen dressing-gown hanging about him; a violin and bow in his hands, and as he played he swayed and twisted in all directions, while round him everywhere, clinging to the pictures, on the backs of chairs, swarming over the easel, were snakes in a state of intense excitement, darting and snapping, the sound of their horrible hissing sounding at times over the wail of the music.

This continued for a while: then gradually they grew quieter. Instead of the continuous striking, they moved more sinuously and began to take long, curving and indescribably graceful poises, swinging backwards and forwards to the rythm of the music; as this grew slower they settled down in large coils, and all the excitement and hissing was over. Indeed, had we not seen their positions at first, it would have been difficult to detect their presence in the room, so still had they become.

Then the music and the motions of the man grew quieter, slower and finally ceased. He looked critically round the room, went and touched the heads of one or two of the creatures caressingly, then reached for a black bottle, and as he raised his face to drink, we saw it was quivering and ghastly, and his hand was trembling so violently he could scarcely hold the bottle. He caught sight of our faces peering down, pulled himself together, and cried:

"Hallo, you chaps! Did you see him? Come down and have a drink."

As far as we could gather, Mr. Burglar must have had a pretty bad fright; he seems to have clambered down from the top flight—of course being unaware of the eccentricities of genius. The snakes evidently spied him just as he caught sight of them. What he thought while half way down the wall on seeing a score of serpents coming after him, we shall never know! but it resulted in a howl of terror, which woke Melton, who, it appears made a habit of letting out his venomous pets at night for exercise.

The next day my curiosity led me to pay a visit to Melton's room. On entering, I found Bessie there, lying in a hammock, and appearing very much at home; while Melton stood near, smoking, and caressing one of his everlasting pets.

Melton, after proffering rum and tobacco, proceeded to show off his animals. First one, then another he brought out, handling them easily and familiarly as they coiled round him; talking to them, kissing them, as they silently, sinuously glided about him, touching his face, his neck, his throat, with their flat, vicious looking heads. Then I was formally introduced to the boa. He was, I think, the biggest serpent I have ever seen. Melton had had him ever since he was a baby, and with a few strains of music could control him, hypnotise him, so that he would stay as placed for an incredible time, fixed, silent, motionless, but for the weird motion of his tongue.

All the snakes seemed alike amenable to music; it swayed them, roused them to fierce hissing, or soothed them to trance-like quiet. And of music Melton was a master; whatever instrument he touched, and, seemingly, however he touched it, vibrated harmoniously. He played for me that day; I am fond of music and thought I understood somewhat of it, but here I was completely lost; the room was full of sighing sounds, wild, mournful and sweet, and I forgot the grinning

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skulls, the snakes and all the other oddities of his room in a perfect trance of delight.

Bessie, at first, when the music began, rose and moved about restlessly, then sat down again, and I forgot her; but when it ceased I looked at her once more and started. She sat stiffly up, almost rigidly, gazing straight in front of her, with a strange, uncanny look in her pretty eyes. Her hands were clenched tightly in her lap, her lips slightly apart, though she hardly seemed to breathe. I turned towards Melton and caught a look of half annoyance, half anxiety, in his nervous face; he walked across the room, and rather clumsily, I thought, stumbled over a stool, bringing it down with a crash. When I recovered from my start, Bessie was rubbing her eyes and looking round as if she had just awakened.

Melton's mood seemed to change, and seizing a mahl stick, he began to poke viciously into the cages of some of the unoffending pets, and soon raised up a most horrible hissing, that successfully served to distract my attention, if such was his intent.

During the next few days I did a considerable amount of thinking. I felt quite certain that there had been something queer about Bessie that afternoon. She had had the same helpless look that the snakes had when the music obtained control over them. Could it be possible that it acted in the same manner on her, and if so, did she know it? I could not help thinking that Melton at least knew it. If so, what did it all mean?

One afternoon, about ten days later, Bessie was posing for me for some black and white illustrations. The whole place was intensely still, most of the men being out. The faint notes of a violin came from the direction of Melton's closed doors, and, I confess, the plaintive melody soothed me despite the uncanny feelings it aroused.

Bessie was sitting quieter than usual. Generally when the head was finished she kept up a pretty continuous flow of chatter and laughter; but to-day she was quite silent. Once or twice I tried to start a conversation, but met with nothing but monosyllables in return.

I was vaguely conscious of the continuance of the music for some time, but finally became so engrossed in my work that I did not notice when it ceased. Then I saw Bessie pass her hand wearily across her eyes, and, thinking she was tired, told her to rest. I looked up a moment later; she was still sitting in the same position, but there was some indefinable change in her; her whole attitude seemed one of strained eagerness, and, as I watched, her lips parted and her head inclined a little forward, as if listening intently; then suddenly her whole figure seemed to start and stiffen rigidly; she gave a half shudder and rose up, her hand to her head, and a strange, frightened look on her face.

"Yes, yes, I hear; I am coming," she muttered. I jumped up, thinking she was ill.

"Bessie, what is it?"

But she waved me to one side, walked quickly to the door, unlocked and opened it, and started down the passage, I following.

She went directly to Melton's door, opened it and entered, perhaps two feet ahead of me.

I was so surprised at her strange manner, that I naturally went in after her. She walked calmly towards the great divan in the corner, stopped for an instant, then stooped and picked up the violin and bow that lay on the floor. As she stooped, I looked beyond her and saw what her figure had hitherto hidden, and at the sight my heart seemed for one instant to stand still, then thump against my ribs with a shock that made me stagger.

On the couch, propped by pillows, sat Melton, stiff, rigid, his eyes glazed and staring, and round him coiled and slowly tightening and crushing him was Buz, the boa. Even as I looked, the reptile's head went gliding round the man's throat for a last, final grip, and the man sat inert, unconscious of his terrible danger. I gave one wild gasp, then sprang to a chair, tore down an old sword and started towards them, but with a fierce gesture Bessie waved me back, and the next instant drew the bow across the voilin.

Was I mad? This child, who could not play a note, seemed to draw the very soul out of the instrument, and, swaying from side to side, as I had seen Melton do, she moved towards the serpent.

And that horrible thing paused, seemingly puzzled, while I watched behind her in a state of excitement impossible to analyse, though I recognised even at that moment that had I attacked the reptile, I could not have got a chance at him without risking Melton's life.

Well, that girl played on and on; the same wild dirge music that Melton used to improvise throbbed through the air, and her slender body vibrated with it as she swayed backwards and forwards. The head of the snake was protruding from the under side of Melton's jaw, its attention diverted from its prey to that slight, swaying figure. It seemed like eternity while the boa poised motionless; then slowly he began to unloose those terrible coils; fold after fold was unloosened till only one remained, and from this fixed base the great boa's body curled gracefully out towards the music. But the man sat as stiff and rigid as ever, though he was free.

As I saw the snake's ugly, stealthy head drawing slowly towards the girl, I cautiously slipped past her, glancing at her, to let her know my purpose as I did so. But she never even saw me; her eyes were just like Melton's, fixed and staring, while her face was drawn and ghastly. I sidled along, well out of reach of Buz, who, however was far too intent with Bessie to notice me; then, when I was well behind him, I measured my distance, raised the sword and—swish!—Buz's head flew clean across the studio.

The body gave one or two convulsive wriggles, then the violin gave several screeches of the most villainous discord I ever heard, and the next moment Bessie was on her knees at Melton's side.

"Arthur, sweetheart, wake up! Oh, Arthur!"

Then slowly, as if in answer to the call of love, Melton came back with a shuddering sigh from—where?

Well, it was very interesting, and I stood staring with my mouth rather more open than intelligence warrants—the dead snake in one hand and the sword in the other—until I became conscious that—well, really, perhaps I was rather *de trop*; so I sneaked out on tiptoe and shut the door.

They are married now, and apparently Melton has reformed; any how the snake hobby is a thing of the past, and they live in a little flat and are very happy.

As to exactly what happened that afternoon, nobody really knows, and I doubt if anybody ever will. Melton declares that all he remembers was sitting on the divan and fiddling to the late Buz, who was poised in front of him; he recollects thinking how bright the reptile's eyes were and how steadily they looked into his.

As for Bessie, she declares she fell asleep while posing for me, and did the fiddling in a dream. So far as I can see, it seems to have been a case of love and hypnotism all round.

A. Kempster.

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A Love Sacrifice.

"Yes, Jack, I am proud of you!" she had whispered, in response to his question. his kisses were still warm on her lips, their hearts were beating in unison, though not so tumultuously as before; and now that the first rapture and thrill were over they were asking questions, and making their little confessions, after the manner of lovers on the threshold of an engagement.

"How many times have I been in love before? Now, Jack, do you think that is a fair question?" she asked, meeting his look with a roguish glance.

"Why, certainly it is, Dora," he replied earnestly. "You say you love me, so it doesn't really make any difference about the others; but I think I ought to know. Still, if there are so many of them——"

"Please stop, Jack! I won't have you saying such dreadful things and with that look on your face!" she interrupted, playfully placing her hand over his mouth, but quickly withdrawing it when he attempted to kiss it.

"How dare you!" she exclaimed, "after the way you've been talking!"

"Well, if you don't want me to say things why don't you answer my question?"

"Must I, Jack?"

"I am afraid you must, my dear."

"And you won't hate me after I tell, will you?"

"Well—"

"'That depends,' you are going to say. You needn't hesitate so long; I can read your thoughts."

"Can you? That's convenient for you, I'm sure. I wish I could read yours, then I'd know the answer to my question."

"Would you really like to know?"

"Why, yes; or I shouldn't have asked it."

"Well, Jack, if it will relieve your mind to know it, you have no predecessors."

"Are you sure, Dora?"

"Yes, Jack. You are the first and only one."

"Thank you, Dora! I'm glad to hear it; and now that question is settled we will——"

"Oh, no, my dear; you don't get off quite so easily as that; I want your confession now. About how many dozen times have you been in love?"

Jack Vernon winced. He hadn't counted on that.

"Come, young man, you are now in the witness box, sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!" she continued banteringly.

"Must I?" said Jack, helplessly repeating her question of a few minutes before.

"I am afraid you must, my dear," mimicked she.

"But I am afraid you will hate me after I confess."

"Is the record then, so long?"

"No; it is a very short one. I have never loved but once before."

"And she—she refused you?"

"No, I never asked her."

"Why not? You see, I want the whole story now."

"Because of pride. She was a wealthy heiress. I, a penniless barrister, with my fame and fortune yet to make. I loved her; I am not ashamed to say it; she was a woman that one could not help loving; she was all to me then that you are now, and——"

"And more. Go on and say it, Jack; I want the whole truth!"

"No, I won't say that, but she was the first, and love was a new sensation to me then, and if I had been her equal in wealth and station I might—but, pshaw! What is the use of telling you all this? It is all over now. Her love was not for me. I have put it aside—and, besides, I have you. But why are you looking so sober, Dora? Have I confessed too much? You wanted the whole truth, you know!"

"Yes, and I am glad you were brave enough to tell it. How long ago was it that—that this happened?" she faltered.

"Three years."

"And her name?" she asked in low tones.

"Need I tell that?"

"Yes, please," said Dora faintly.

"Edith Burton."

Dora's face grew suddenly pale.

"I thought, perhaps, she was the one," she said, in a voice that Jack scarcely recognised.

"Why, do you know her?" he exclaimed in surprise.

"I used to be at boarding school with her," answered Dora. She had regained control of her voice now. "She is a good, noble woman, far better than I am, and I don't wonder that you love her."

"You mean loved," corrected Jack. "My love for her is in the past tense, not the present."

"'True love can never die,'" quoted Dora gravely, "Wasn't it the divine William who said that? But

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here, Jack, we have talked enough of love for one evening. Don't you think so?"

"But you haven't promised to marry me yet."

"You didn't ask me that question. You simply asked me if I loved you, and you got your answer."

"And I am to take the rest for granted, eh?"

"Well, no; nothing should be taken for granted in this world. I'll give you your answer, but not now. I think I'd better send it to you in writing."

"Dear me! How formal we are getting all at once! But, after all, I think I prefer it that way! then I can carry your note next to my heart for a mascot until you are mine for good and all. Shall I run over here for it to-morrow morning?"

"No; I'll post it to you at your chambers."

"All right, Dora; and now, just one before I go!" He bent down and planted a kiss on her unresisting lips. "Thanks, dear! Now please forget that there ever was any other girl, and don't look quite so sober the next time I call. Good-night, Dora!"

"Good night, Jack!"

When Jack Vernon reached his chambers in the Temple next morning he found Dora Stevens' note awaiting him. Tearing it open he read:

DEAR JACK:—The love I expressed for you an hour ago I find has turned to pity, and I am going to make you happy by sending to you the only woman you have a right to marry. After hearing your confession, and knowing what I do, I could never be happy with you. I know you think you are in love with me, but the tendrils of your heart are still entwined around that early love, and she needs you more than I do. I told you she was my schoolmate years ago. I still regard her as one of my dearest friends, and, though we have not met for a long time, we have always kept up correspondence. I inclose my latest letter from her, received two months ago. I did not know until to-night who the man is that she loves. I know now, and I wish you both all the joy that life in each other's society can bring you. Go to her, Jack, and make her happy—and my blessing and prayers will go with you. Not good-night this time, but good-bye!

Ever your Friend
DORA.

The inclosure ran as follows:

MY DEAR DORA,—No, I am not engaged yet, and never expect to be. I have had plenty of chances to confer my hand and fortune—especially the latter—upon aspiring applicants, but I have declined them all. I have never met a man I really cared for, except one, and I know he cared for me at a time, perhaps he does yet; but, alas! he discovered that I was an heiress, and then pride (he was a young barrister, with plenty of brains and ambition, but no money) held him back. He loved me; my heart told me that; but fortune-hunters were fluttering round me, like moths about a candle, and I suppose he was afraid if he spoke he would be classed with the rest—just as though the alchemy of a woman's love could not detect the gold among the dross!

Ah, well! he is gone, and there's no use mourning for the past. I cannot help sighing, though, to think that the very money which attracted so many society moths should drive away the only man I ever loved!

There, Dora you have my secret, and know why I shall evermore a maiden be—but please don't tell. Wishing you a lover true, some time, dear Dora (not being burdened with wealth, you won't have so many unworthy ones as I) and hoping to hear from you soon, I remain, with oceans of love, yours affectionately,

EDITH BURTON.

Late that afternoon Dora Stevens received the following brief message from Jack Vernon.

MY DEAR DORA,—Many thanks for your kind note and the inclosure. There are at least two angels left on earth. You are one of them. May Heaven ever guard and bless you! Yours gratefully,

JACK.

P.S.—I start for Rochester at once, and will post this on my way to the station.

And as Dora read these words, she smiled one little, wee ghost of a smile, and whispered:

"Better my heart than hers!" H. WILSON.

"SHOULD PARSONS EAT PEAS?"

The Editor of PEARSON'S WEEKLY will give £2 2s. to the person who tells, in not more than 200 words, the best reason why they should or should not. See this week's P.W.

RESULT OF THE BOOK COMPETITION FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 9th.

Miss E. Beal, 33 Basuto Road, Poole Park, Fulham. "King Solomon's Mines." By Rider Haggard.

Mrs. Allan, 12 Sydney Street, Glasgow. "Dreamers of the Ghetto."

J. C. King, R.I. Constabulary, Maryborough, Queen's Co "Origin of Species." By Darwin.

Richard Keddy, 94 Milbourne Street, Carlisle. "Helps to the Bible."

Geo. Hunt, 24 Hinckley Road, Nuneaton. "Sankey's Songs and Solos Music Book."

Thos. Simon, 13 Hauteville, Guernsey. "All About Book-keeping" (Ward and Lock).

"Pick-Me-Up."

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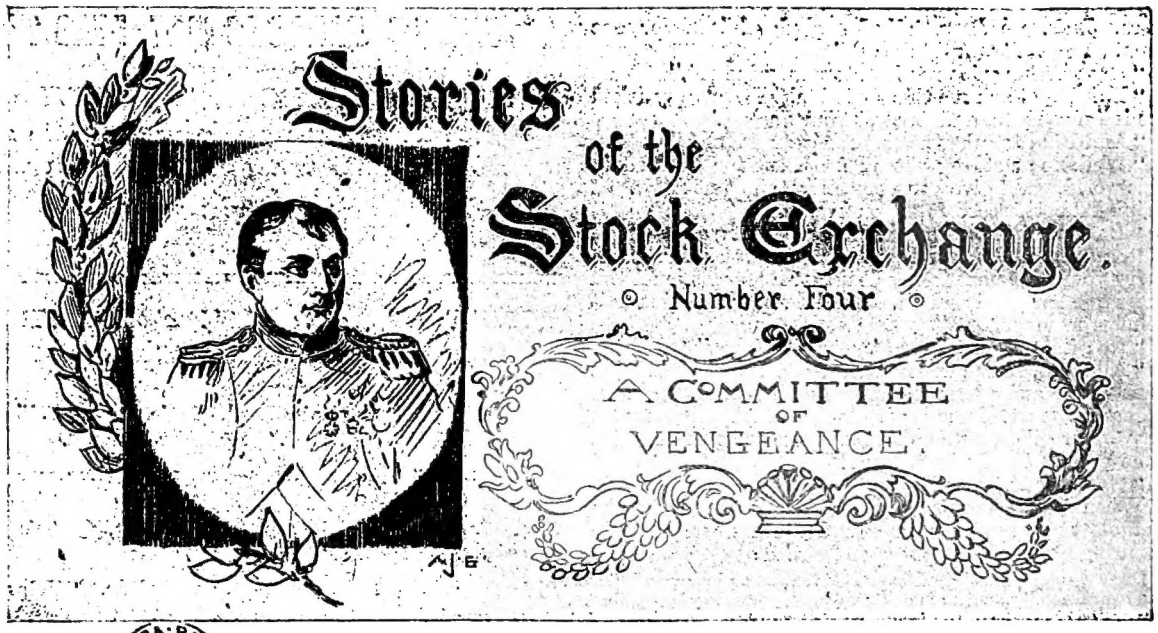

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

Unearthed and Re-Edited by Robert Machray.

I.

It was between midnight and one o'clock of a February morning, in the year 1814, that the landlord, guests, and servants of the "Ship" tavern, then the principal inn in Dover, were awakened by a loud knocking at the front door.

So insistent was the clamour that in a very short time "mine host" appeared at an upper window, and demanded who it was that disturbed the peace of His Majesty's lieges at that ghostly hour with such unghostly noise.

Standing in front of the inn was a figure almost hidden by the darkness. In a clear voice he informed the landlord that he had just come from France with important dispatches, and that it was a matter of the greatest urgency that he should at once procure post-horses and a carriage to proceed to London for the speedy delivery of the letters he carried with him.

"Is it good news you bring?" asked the landlord.

"Ay, that it is," replied the figure.

Descending hastily, the worthy landlord withdrew the bolts that secured the door, and admitted the traveller. Holding up a lantern in his hand, he gazed at the stranger with much curiosity.

The light disclosed a tall, somewhat military-looking man. He was dressed in a long, grey overcoat, and on his head he wore a gold-laced cap. When he unbuttoned his heavy coat he was seen to be wearing some kind of uniform. It was also noticed that his clothes were wet up to his middle, as if he had either been wading through the water, or had been drenched with the surf of the sea.

"I am Colonel de Bourgh, aide-de-camp to Lord Cathcart."

This he said in reply to the inquiring looks of the landlord, who had now been joined by several of the inmates of the house. For good news from France was what every good Briton was dying to hear at that time.

The armies of the Allies, it must be remembered, were hemming in the great and hitherto invincible Napoleon. It was known that he had been defeated, and that his position was well nigh desperate. Still, there was a fear that the genius of the world's greatest soldier might triumph after all, and overcome the tremendous combination that had been formed against him. It was now known, however, that the Allies were almost in sight of Paris, and that a decisive battle might take place at any moment.

Hence the interest in the news that the stranger might bring.

"May I ask your honour," asked the landlord, "what are the tidings, or is the matter secret?"

"No secret, surely," said De Bourgh; "'tis the best of all possible news. But spare me, I pray you; the need for haste is great. Do you order for me a post-chaise and horses while I have some refreshment. I landed an hour ago."

"Landed an hour ago!" exclaimed the landlord. "Did your honour not land at the quay?"

"Nay, I cannot tell you exactly how I came; that, indeed, must be kept close—you understand. I may say, though, that I was landed about two miles from here on the beach, and got wet, as you may see, in the process."

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The landlord turned away to do the bidding of the stranger. A commercial traveller, who was stopping at the inn, now asked De Bourgh if he would not be kind enough to so far gratify their curiosity as to tell them what had actually happened.

"Well, I do not think that it will do any harm to inform you that the war is over, for Napoleon is dead."

"Napoleon dead!" responded the other, with a world of glad surprise in the tones of his voice; "that is good news indeed."

"Yes; he is dead; his body cut in pieces—ay, scrambled for by the savage Cossacks who slew him."

"Horrible, horrible," cried the commercial. "Where was it that this took place?"

"*That* I scarcely think it right to tell. And yet, why not?"

"'Twill bring home the news to us all so much the more if your honour will but condescend to give us so much of the story of his death as you think is right."

"Well, then, you must know that there have been fights not a few, ay, great and bloody battles, the scene of which lies not many leagues from Paris. Sachen, Schwartzenburg, and Blücher, like dogs after their quarry, have been biting at his heels, and springing upon his flanks and shoulders. At length he was forced to stand at bay, and in the most dreadful battle you can imagine his army was overwhelmed, and he himself killed by the Cossacks of Sachen. As I told you, the enraged soldiers showed him no mercy, but cut his body into a thousand pieces, as if to glut their fury with this so barbarous revenge."

"'Tis almost too good to be true!" was the involuntary exclamation of one who listened.

De Bourgh looked at the speaker fiercely.

"Do you doubt my word, sir?" said he. "Ah, well," continued he with a shrug of his shoulders, "it will be no news soon, for in another day or two it will be all over the country. Perhaps," said he, turning to an attendant who had just come into the room with a tray on which were placed cold meat, bread, and other provisions for supper, "you will bring me some ink and writing paper. No time must be lost in acquainting the Admiral at Deal with the glorious intelligence. He can then communicate with London by telegraph, if the day be fine, and presently every joy bell in the city will be set a-ringing."

While De Bourgh was hurriedly dispatching the meal which had been set before him, the landlord entered to say that the chaise and horses were now ready. Then writing materials were brought in, the letter to the Admiral written, and sent by a trusty messenger to his residence at Deal.

Pulling out some napoleons from his pocket, De Bourgh asked the landlord what he owed him, and tendered two of them in payment of his bill. When the boniface rather demurred at the foreign money, De Bourgh said that it did not matter, and forthwith produced a note of the Bank of England. Having received the change, in another minute or so he had

In a clear voice he informed the landlord that he had just come from France with important dispatches.

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entered the carriage, and was on his way to Canterbury, where, at an inn called the "Fountain," he changed horses.

Here his postboys, who were known at the "Fountain," smoothed matters for him, and after a brief halt he was thundering along the road to Sittingbourne, where, at the "Rose" of that place, he procured fresh horses. Without delay, he continued his journey, and reached Rochester.

His postboys had taken him to the "Crown," and at first he experienced a difficulty in getting a change of horses. Some few minutes were spent by him in the tavern, and its landlord made bold to ask De Bourgh if by any chance he might be in a position to tell him what was the most recent news from France. Whereupon De Bourgh repeated what he had told the landlord of the "Ship" at Dover.

"Great news—great news!" So huge was his delight that he refused to accept anything for the trouble De Bourgh had put him to.

"Nay, nay," said he, "I should think myself but a mean fellow if I received aught from you who are the bearer of such splendid intelligence."

One result of this short conversation was that the landlord had observed, as De Bourgh was warming himself at the fire, and had unloosed his overcoat so as to get the full effect of the heat, that De Bourgh was wearing a military uniform, across the breast of which was a scarf, and, also, beside it, a star, as of some order or decoration.

The chaise having come at length to the front of the inn, De Bourgh entered it, and directed the postboys to go on with all speed to Dartford, which, as everybody knows, is no great distance from London. Everything proved favourable for the journey, and Dartford was reached in due time. From this point he went more slowly, as the morning light was now more clear. Soon afterwards he dismissed the chaise, having first inquired where he was likely to get a hackney carriage.

Having obtained what he sought, a hackney coach, he made his way to the Marsh Gate, Lambeth, where presently he disappeared.

Before he dismissed his postboys he had given them wine and money, and at the same time had told them the wonderful news he brought about Napoleon, saying that there was no secrecy about the matter, and that they might tell it to anybody they pleased.

The light disclosed a tall, somewhat military-looking man.

II.

About ten o'clock the same morning, knots of brokers and dealers were gathered about the Stock Exchange, the adjacent courts, and the approaches to it. At the close of business on the preceding Saturday, the market had, on the whole, been quiet and dull. If there was any tendency at all, it was in the direction of lower prices. Omnium had closed from 26½ to 27 premium.

They were discussing somewhat freely and eagerly the various items which had appeared in that morning's *Times* and *Post*, with respect to the movements of the Allies on their march to Paris, which was still held for Napoleon by the Empress Queen and Regent, the Austrian Archduchess, who had been wedded by her father to the "Little Corsican."

There were different opinions expressed as to how soon or how long it would be before the Dread of Europe was overthrown, but all were

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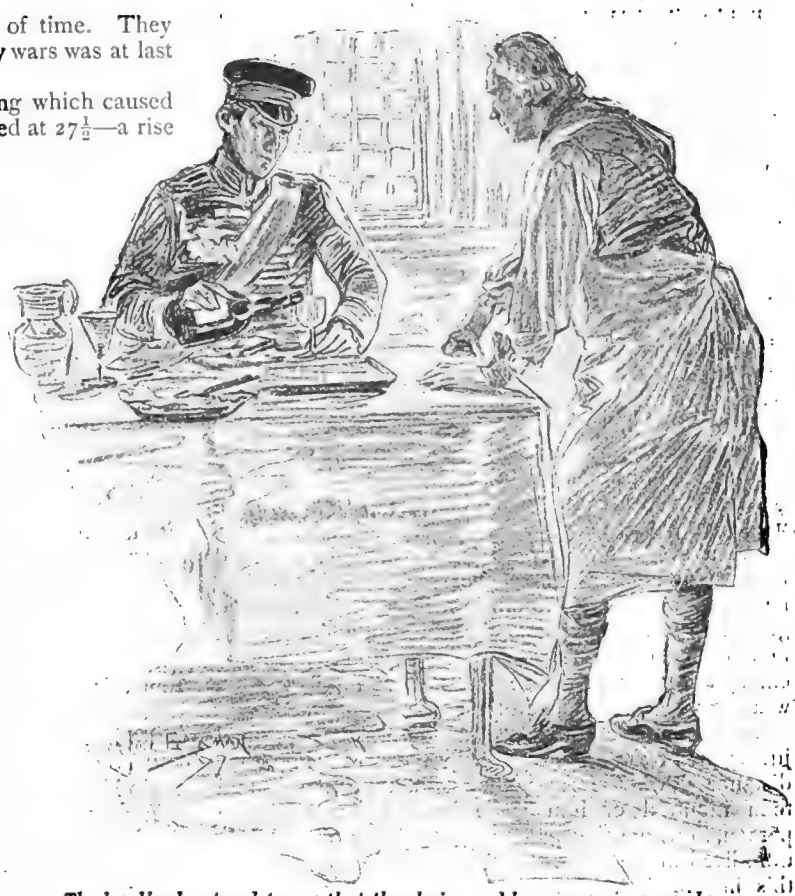
agreed that it was now only a matter of time. They all agreed that the end of these bloody wars was at last well in sight.

It was probably this universal feeling which caused the first prices of Omnium to be quoted at $27\frac{1}{2}$—a rise of nearly a full point from the previous Saturday.

It was about half-past ten when one of those sudden inexplicable waves of feeling for which the Stock Exchange is famous suddenly passed over the members. What caused it was not at first quite clear. That it was something good was, however, sufficiently obvious, as the bidding for Omnium quickly became clamorous, while the price of it was raised at a bound up to 30, $30\frac{1}{2}$, 31.

Now a crowd on the Stock Exchange is a good deal like any other crowd, and acts precisely in the same way. Just as a great body of people frequently come together, and is swayed in a particular direction without much rhyme or reason, so the various units of this crowd on 'Change acted together, as if moved by a common impulse. There seemed to be good news, prices were rising, and everyone was anxious to be in the swim.

The first excitement over, and the upward movement of the Funds having stopped for a time, they had leisure to make inquiries as to what had caused this remarkable buoyancy in the National Securities. And it was easy enough to find out what had occurred.



The landlord entered to say that the chaise and horses were now ready.

Shortly after the opening of the Stock Exchange expresses had arrived from Dover in hot haste with the extraordinary but most welcome intelligence that Napoleon, the great disturber of peace, and therefore of all the movements of money in the market, had not only been utterly defeated, but that he himself had been slain. No wonder was it then that a considerable rise had taken place in the Funds, for never, surely, had there ever been received a better piece of news.

Many questions, of course, were asked as to the manner in which the news had been brought to town. So far as could be made out, a courier with dispatches, a colonel in the army, had landed at Dover late on the preceding night, and had brought the amazing intelligence. The dress, bearing, and position of the messenger were all such, it was declared, as to place the tidings beyond doubt.

As soon as the messenger could procure horses he had set out for London, so it was said, but not before he had sent a communication to the port admiral at Deal telling him of what had taken place. These expresses from Dover said that they had been so joyously affected by what they had heard that they had set out immediately for London, and they expressed some surprise that nothing had been seen of the courier from France, the military gentleman, who had gone on ahead of them in the postchaise. At first, however, there was not much attention given to this aspect of the affair.

Another hour passed quickly away. One or two of the more critical members went to the Lord Mayor, and asked if he had received any confirmation of the report. He replied that nothing had reached him directly, but that he understood that some sort of message had been received from Admiral Foley at Deal by telegraph, which certainly appeared to give a greater body of colour to the statement. For himself, he said, he was not quite convinced, as it was a time of endless rumours and counter rumours.

By noon, a feeling of doubt had sprung up. The Funds began to show some signs of dropping again. The members of the Stock Exchange were no longer all of the same opinion, and the two sides, into which it is generally divided, the "Bulls" and the "Bears," were once more in evidence.

So matters stood, when another wind of excitement arose, and in another minute or two, amidst a

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tumult of voices, in a hideous and indescribable din, the price of Omnium was freely given at 33—nearly six points of a rise from the last quotations of the previous Saturday.

There was, to be sure, a special reason for this new outbreak, this frenzy to buy the Funds. All doubt as to the death of the hated Napoleon appeared to be completely dissipated by its being substantiated from what seemed an entirely different, and probably trustworthy, source.

III.

It was about six o'clock of that same Monday morning, while as yet the dawn had hardly come, when two French officers landed at Northfleet from a six-oared gig, which had made its way mysteriously up the river in the darkness. When they had been put ashore, the boat immediately put off, and was instantly swallowed up in the gloom.

Repairing forthwith to an inn, the whereabouts of which they seemed sufficiently acquainted with, they found a sleepy waiter, who took them into a lighted room. No sooner did his eyes rest upon them than he stood agape and trembling before them. At a glance he saw they were people of importance, dressed in a uniform which was strange to him; but what chiefly attracted his notice was the fact that they were wearing white cockades in their military caps.

Telling him that they were friends, and that they had just landed from a foreign ship that was lying some distance down the river, they stilled his alarm, and then inquired of him if he knew where a certain person, to whom they had brought a letter of introduction, lived in the town. As he was able to give them this information, he readily did so, saying, however, that it was too early surely for them to disturb him. To this they replied that their business was of so urgent a character that, early as it was, they must immediately go and find him if that were possible.

It had now become somewhat lighter, and the waiter standing at the door of the inn, directed them how to go, but they had scarcely got out of his sight before they quickened their steps to a run, and made for the house where they were going without any hesitation or difficulty as to the way.

The person whom they sought was still abed, but, telling his servant that his master would on this occasion certainly forgive his being aroused from sleep, they bade him call him at once, and at the same time gave him the letter of introduction, saying: "This will sufficiently excuse our intrusion at this untimely hour."

Some ten minutes later, the gentleman appeared, holding in his hand the letter they had brought. It was easy to see that he had been somewhat suddenly awakened from slumber, as, while his face indicated that he was greatly pleased, his eyes still had an air of sleepiness about them.

"You gentlemen brought me this letter, I presume," said he. "'Tis from my old friend M. Replessis, and I am so much his debtor that I will do anything within my power to serve him. He informs me that you bring news of a very special nature, but he preferred that you should tell me it by word of mouth, rather than that he should do so by means of a letter."

He looked at them with keen inquiry, taking in both their dress and looks with the greatest interest.

"M. Replessis is also a good friend of ours, and he assured us that no one was more likely than yourself to forward the matter which we have in hand."

"And that is?"

"We desire to get to London with the utmost speed. We are the bearers of a great piece of news which will gratify many people, and these not English people alone, but also many of our own countrymen."

The stranger spoke with a strong foreign accent, and interlarded his speech with several French phrases as he went along.

"What has happened?"

"Much," he replied. "The Allies are victorious, Paris is now occupied by them; but the most important thing of all is that Napoleon is dead, and that our sovereign, Louis XVIII., is now master of France."

"Bonaparte dead!" was the exclamation. "Can that indeed be true, gentlemen?"

"There is no doubt whatever about it," was the reply. "Our object, indeed, is to take that information to the English Ministry. There could be nothing more important, could there?"

"You are right. Now, what is it that you wish me to do?" But even as he asked them the question he murmured to himself, like one in a dream, "Napoleon dead! Napoleon dead!"

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to arrange at once with the keeper of some livery stable, whom you will doubtless know, to take us to London with all convenient haste. We are strangers here, and know not the way. Will you do this for us?"

"With pleasure," he replied. "You will allow me to offer you some slight refreshment, while you wait, and I will myself go at once and order horses and a carriage for you. There shall be no delay, I assure you."

He was as good as his word, but an hour had nearly passed before all was in readiness, and it was now broad daylight. When they descended to the carriage, they saw that the horses had been decked with laurel. In this way the friend of M. Replessis showed how highly he esteemed the news which had been brought.

They journeyed on to London by way of Shooter's Hill without mishap, although there were not a few whom they passed on the road who were greatly struck by their appearance, and also by the triumphal garnishing of their horses.

It was just a little after noon when that identical postchaise with the laurel-bedecked horses drove slowly over London Bridge. The two French officers in it distributed billets to the crowd, who wondered what was the meaning of the appearance of this extraordinary portent in the city. Suddenly there was a

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The waiter standing at the door of the inn, directed them how to go.

great shout of joy, of unmistakable gladness, for they had seen written on these billets the statements that Paris had fallen before the armies of the Allies, and that Napoleon was dead.

"Napoleon is dead!"

This was the cry that went surging along the streets. It was taken up here, there, everywhere. It flew from mouth to mouth. The words were swift winged, and sped about all over the town.

The French officers in the postchaise next paraded through Cheapside and Fleet-street, passed over Blackfriars Bridge, then drove rapidly to the Marsh Gate, Lambeth—where, it will be remembered, De Bourgh had also gone some two hours previously. Here they disappeared, exactly as he had done.

IV.

That echoing cry, "Napoleon is Dead," had not gone all round London without being heard in the Stock Exchange. Indeed, it was this that had brought about the second advance in Omnium, until it had reached the highest point of the day. Towards two o'clock in the afternoon, however, there began to appear well marked signs of a reaction in the market. Some of those who had been most eager buyers commenced to wonder—for the joy of the Stock Exchange is never very distant from its gloom—if what they had heard were true.

As the hours wore on no confirmation came. The ministers of the Government sent word that they

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had received no intelligence of Napoleon's death, or of the fall of Paris, and that they were inclined to believe that the whole affair was nothing more than a plot, a tissue of falsehoods woven purely and simply for the purpose of influencing the price of the Funds.

Before the day was over this was the general opinion—so swiftly do ideas change. Omnium declined severely, losing nearly the whole of the augmented price. There were many losers by the day's operations. They were loud in their threats. They had been laughed at, mocked, deceived—bought and sold like a flock of silly sheep.

Next day doubt was at an end. It was known that Paris had not fallen, and that Napoleon was not dead, but still fighting, although against tremendous odds. The newspapers came out with the whole story, and denounced the plot as the most scandalous and infamous imposition ever perpetrated upon the Stock Exchange. The committee of that institution formed itself into one of vengeance, and immediately took steps to ferret out the authors of the conspiracy.

On the eventful Monday there had been sold large quantities both of Omnium and of the 3 per cents. These transactions had been mainly at the instance of a well-known firm of brokers. A little investigation served to show that this firm had dealt in the Funds on that day for an amount which, in round figures, came to a million sterling.

Feeling in the matter was so strong among the members of the Stock Exchange that the firm in question would have been forced to divulge the names of their principals, had it not been that, in the ordinary course of business, they had in any case to do so. But when the Committee found amongst these principals the name of one of the most distinguished servants of the Crown, and a relation of his, they were half inclined at first to let the matter rest.

The affair, however, had by this time become so public that its future was practically taken out of their hands; they were compelled to go on, though now with caution and secrecy. For it had transpired that those chiefly concerned in the plot were no other than Lord Cochrane and a nephew of his.

There was no want of evidence as to the appearance and dress of those who had been guilty of carrying out the conspiracy.

The innkeepers at Dover and Rochester, the commercial traveller who had spoken to De Bourgh at the "Ship," the postboys who had conducted De Bourgh along the various stages of his route to London, the driver of the hackney coach who had dropped him at the Marsh Gate, Lambeth, the gentleman at Northfleet who had been imposed upon by a letter, which, of course, had been forged, from his friend, M. Replessis, and several others who had seen either De Bourgh or the other party in the course of their travels—all these either came forward as witnesses, or were gradually hunted down.

The problem was, how was De Bourgh to be connected with so illustrious a personage as Lord Cochrane? Who was De Bourgh?

Meanwhile a process, which can only be described as one of bribery and corruption, had been going on with respect to the servants of Lord Cochrane and his nephew. Through this channel it was ultimately discovered that on that very Monday a man dressed as a French officer, or in some sort of foreign uniform, had called in the forenoon at Lord Cochrane's house in Green-street. The name of this person, however, was declared to be not De Bourgh, but De Berenger.

De Berenger was tracked down, was identified by the Dover innkeeper as De Bourgh, was arrested on charge of being concerned in a fraudulent conspiracy, and thrown into prison.

Shortly afterwards Lord Cochrane and several others who had either profited by the plot on the Stock Exchange, or who had been proved to be actually concerned in its working out, were seized and sent to the King's Bench prison.

The arrest of so eminent a man as Lord Cochrane, who had rendered great services to the country by the splendid deeds he had performed against the enemy at sea, created a profound and painful sensation throughout the land. It was understood, however, that he emphatically declared that he was entirely innocent of any complicity in the whole affair. He had been in the habit, he said, of buying and selling the public Funds, but merely in the way of speculation, as any other gentleman might do.

At the trial which took place in June of that year, it was shown that Lord Cochrane, his nephew, and one or two others for whom Omnium had been sold at the given time, were in such a position that they would have been heavy losers on their accounts with their brokers if no rise had taken place in Omnium exactly at that very date.

As witness after witness was produced for the prosecution, their testimony was so condemning that it was soon seen that the verdict of the jury could scarcely be other than that of "guilty."

And such was their verdict.

Some days after their finding sentence was pronounced. Lord Cochrane, De Berenger, and four others were given twelve months imprisonment in the Marshalsea, and at the same time Lord Cochrane was fined one thousand pounds, and two others were also mulcted in considerable sums.

Now comes the strangest part of this story, which is taken with but slight change from the journals of the time. It was subsequently proved conclusively that Lord Cochrane had no part whatever in the plot. De Berenger in the end owned up. He had merely gone to Lord Cochrane's house as a blind. It had been known that Lord Cochrane speculated in the funds, and advantage was taken of this to implicate him in the affair in the hope that his great name might shield the others, perhaps, in the event of anything untoward taking place.

Lord Cochrane in after days took his proper place among the heroes of the English race, as the Earl of Dundonald, and lies buried in Westminster Abbey.

(*Next week: "In Twenty-four Hours."*)

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TRACKED!

"Our last day together," she said. "Well, it's been a good time, hasn't it? I wonder how many people at the lake are saying the same thing?"

"Inanity of inanities, all is inanity," I replied sententiously. Then I stopped to think whether I had said something bright, and stopped so long that my cigar went out.

Her lips curled. "And because the preacher was wise."

I had never seen her sneer before in the whole week of our acquaintance. But, when you come to think of it, when a girl is kittenish, she is likely, as a rule, to have claws. We were sitting in a skiff under the trees at Lake Geneva. The lake lay like a great sheet of cerulean glass, and no breeze stirred the sweltering August afternoon. There was a rattle of dishes and the sound of laughter from the recesses of the island where we were moored. That was the way I was able to fix the time of day, for my watch was in my coat, and it was too much trouble to get it.

"The aggravating part of a woman is that she keeps cool on a hot day," I said. Then I wondered if she would comprehend the sarcasm. I lit my cigar.

"The aggravating part of a man is—the man," she replied angrily. She did not look cool then.

"To return to our starting point—it has been a good time, hasn't it?"

She said nothing. What came next was more her fault than mine. When a girl says nothing, she knows the man has to say something.

"Don't you wish there could be more of it?" I continued, wishing at that moment that flirtations did not fall into grooves.

"It's been very pleasant. I always did love the lake."

"Is the lake the only thing you?"

"It's the only thing I ever said I—"

"But it never asked you; and the other things must—"

"Shall we be moving on?" she asked irrelevantly.

"Not yet," I said sternly. I was beginning to forget it was hot. She was pulling a rose to pieces, and when I caught hold of her hand I pricked my finger. Then, of course, I called her by her Christian name, and went through the time-honoured formula. I did not succeed in kissing her, but she seemed thankful that no boats were passing. She glanced nervously round to make sure of it. Her face froze, but I got the impression that it was by a muscular effort rather than by exercise of righteous indignation.

"Take me back, if you please, Mr. Killeen."

"Is there no——?"

"How dare you?" she said (and I began to think she really was angry). "Engaged as you are—"

She stopped and blushed. In my astonishment I as nearly as possible gave myself away on the spot. I saved myself, though.

"Engaged!" I said. "What on earth do you mean? I never loved anyone but you."

"From what I have seen of you I should imagine that made very little difference to your engagement. Do you think I am blind? You've got letters every day at breakfast addressed in the same hand-writing."

"My sister's letters," forgetting how aged was the ruse.

"How fond your sister must be of you!" It was the second time she had sneered. "Unfortunately, you told me yesterday you had no sisters."

I had to fence then. "Well, for all you know I may be married." I had moored the skiff, and we were on our way back.

"Yes, but I happen to know you are engaged." And again she blushed confusedly.

"You know!" I exclaimed faintly.

"You have been engaged to Miss Minnie Heilig just seven months, if you wish me to be precise."

That was all. I taunted her, implored her, besought her, but to no purpose. I was as much in the dark when we reached the hotel as when she astonished me by telling the truth. When I spoke to her she would not answer.

What I needed most was stimulant—I could see that. When I got to the bar I met Harry Day.

"What, you?" he said. "Let's have something. What's yours?"

We had five of them and I felt no difference.

"By the way, old man, what in the name of the seven Sutherland sisters were you doing in a skiff with Maud Conway?"

"Never heard of her."

"Oh, come old man; I saw you, you know."

I was not listening much to what he said.

"Her name's Fanny Keene," I said absently. In reply he roared out laughing till I was driven out of my dreaminess.

"What the dickens are you laughing at?"

"You don't mean to say you don't know who she is?"

"I know nothing about her except that she is the nicest girl I—well, look here, Day, if you want to keep friends with me you'd better not say anything against that lady's character."

Day stopped laughing. "You don't mean to say you've knocked about London all this time without knowing—'s cleverest female 'tec. Why, she was the chief witness in the Leslie divorce case; she brought the kleptomania business home to Mrs. Austen,—she—"

He ran through a whole list of the dirty linen that had been washed in public during the past year or two. I heard him with a dizzy swimming in my head.

"What are you doing, Killeen? What on earth is she after you for?"

It came to me like a flash. The door stood open at the end of the passage. Beyond there was a seat out on the lawn, and a figure in a white gown on it. I heard Day's voice, "Don't be a fool, man! What are you going to do?" I was upon the lawn almost before he had finished his sentence.

"I know now how you discovered my engagement," I said between my teeth. She answered with her face covered with her hands.

"Luke, forgive me."

"Good-bye," I said.

"She was jealous. Forgive her, too. If she loves you as I do, you ought not to blame her."

"Good-bye," I said.

"Luke! I could not help it. They—they sent me down here. I never knew till it came to our last day what it was going to cost me——"

"Good-bye," I said again. She never raised her head. I felt glad it was twilight.

Reffell Naye.

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A MAN'S MISTAKE.

Through the sighing boughs of the Australian bush there came drifting the hum as of a million bees set in rhythmic tone and tune. It was a great saw at Foley's mill flashing its merciless disc of steel through the logs. Foley himself sat on a low bench, his throat bare, his head leaning against a tree, watching through his slightly opened lids the swift movements of the men at the saw.

The girl who came up noiselessly behind him thrust her small fingers over his forehead and opened the lids of his eyes.

"Wake up, Dave, and take me out in the boat for a row in the shade. The house is hotter than a furnace."

"How did you get here?" said Foley indolently.

"I walked across the logs."

"I wish you wouldn't do that, Lize," said Foley with a frown. "Some day you'll get on a loose one and go under, and the logs will hold you fast."

"I'm too sure footed," laughed Lize, coquettishly thrusting out a slippered foot. "Come on, Dave."

"Oh, it's too warm for such exercise. Ask Langham to go with you. Here he comes." Foley looked up in time to see the curious sidewise glance from the girl's eyes.

"What did you look at me like that for, Lize?" he said suddenly.

"Like what?" she said. Without waiting for an answer she tripped to Langham.

"Dave is lazy and contrary," she said, pouting her pretty lips. "He says, won't you take me down the river in the boat?"

Langham lifted his hat to her. His dark eyes glanced from Foley to the girl with a cynical light that melted into something tender as it rested upon Lize's primrose face.

"With pleasure, Mrs. Foley. Good afternoon to you both. Foley, did you ever feel such a heat in the bush?"

"Not often in Australia," said Foley, shifting his straw hat over his eyes to shut out the glare. "There'll be a storm, a regular scorcher in a day or two."

"No sign of it now," said Lize, glancing at the yellow sky.

"Where is the boat?" queried Langham.

Foley nodded sleepily towards the landing—a platform of logs.

"Down there," he said. "Lize will show you."

Through motionless lids he watched them as they rowed away. His wife blew him a kiss from the tips of her dainty fingers. Far down the river her white dress gleamed like a darting heron under the arched boughs.

The sun had dropped ere the mill shut down for the night. Two of the hands lingered to light their pipes and gossip.

"Foley's gone. Didn't wait for her."

"Foley's a fool. Ketch me sendin' my wife out for a row with a fellow like that Langham. Did you see how he looked at her?"

"Soft on her, hey?"

"And I fancy she is on him," said the other, shrugging his shoulders.

They passed on oblivious of Foley's white face staring at them from the engine-room.

Had Lize been wise or observant she would have caught the ominous calm in Foley's voice as he laid his hand on her shoulder that night.

"Lize, I've been thinking it don't look exactly right, your going so often with that fellow."

"Indeed!" said Lize, her lips curling. "Gentleman is a better word than fellow, Mr. Foley."

"I don't know," said Foley slowly. "Gentlemen don't fall in love with other men's wives."

"Who said so?"

Her face grew suddenly white. Foley's hand tightened its grasp.

"You'd better be careful, Lize. I'll have my way in this. I forbid you to go on the river with Langham again."

"You were the one who sent me! Take your hand off—it hurts! I don't know whether I'll obey such a tyrant or not!"

She fled into the little parlour and Foley heard the bolt slip in the door.

Two days of sultry weather passed, during which the boat remained tied to its tree, the rope swaying in the water undisturbed. Langham, whose vagrant fancy had led him to fit up a rude hut on the south end, did

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not come down to the mill. Foley hoped he would stay away. There was a feeling in the tips of Foley's fingers that would have been relieved could they have rested on Langham's throat.

The sky had grown black with clouds that Saturday evening, and through the trees there came the breath of the storm. The men had left the mill, and Foley, standing midway on the unsteady bridge, swept the heavens with his long glass. He lowered it to watch a snipe in combat with a fellow fowl. A cry broke from his lips; he looked through the glass with an eye keen with fury. There, far down the river, he saw Langham draw Lize towards him and kiss her.

Without waiting to see more, Foley went leaping to the bank like a madman. On, on, up to his house and into the tiny sitting-room. A pearl handled bit of steel lay upon the mantelpiece. He snatched it up and thrust it into his pocket. The cold steel chilled his blood, and the face of Lize looked at him from a rough wooden frame. Foley fell upon his knees and threw the weapon from him.

The storm that had been brewing all the day broke at evening in all its fury. Langham in his cosy cabin heard the outside thunderstorm as in a dream. There was a tempest in his heart—his brain, and the touch of her lips lingering still. Suddenly the door flew open in a burst of rain, and he saw a drenched figure enter the cabin and sink to the ground sobbing and shivering.

"Oh, take me, take me away from here! Take me away—anywhere, Dave struck me—he saw you kiss me, and he will never forgive me."

Langham stroked her wet hair tenderly.

"You are safe with me," he said. "You shall come with me."

"I wish I had not gone with you," she sobbed, yet clinging to him. "I am so cold."

Langham placed her in a chair and found a great shawl to wrap round her; he knelt before her and began to chafe her hands. The September rain was chill and her blue little face was quivering like a child's.

Not until he heard her cry did Langham look up to see Foley standing in the room, his great arms folded upon his breast. Langham sprang to the shelf where his pistol lay, but Foley had a powerful hand upon his arm.

"Not that! If I had wanted to shoot you I would not have given you a chance for life. I've come to talk with you. What are you going to do? I gave her the choice—and she came here."

Langham's face burnt dull scarlet, but Foley's eyes were like steady steel.

"She's been my wife, but I want no woman that don't want me. Still, I can't see her go to ruin! I'll kill her first. She was a baby in a basket cradle when the river floated her to my cabin door. She's been all the world to me ever since. I haven't been so soft-spoken or so loving, but I gave her my name, my love, my respect. Can you do that for her? Or do you want her at all?"

It was a curious, pathetic scene. The girl in the chair stared at Foley, but Langham's face was troubled.

"I love her," he said slowly. "I am willing to take her, but she is innocent now of all but folly. I swear to you, Foley," he added with sudden passion.

"So much the better if you love each other. Now, listen. I am going away this night—no matter where. She can get her freedom in a little while. I won't bother you—unless you cast her off or break her heart! Then, by Heaven, I'll follow you and kill you inch by inch!"

For one moment Foley's eyes blazed their threat into Langham's heart. Then he was gone into the night without one word for Lize.

"He is gone," she said in a dull tone.

Langham bent and kissed her face. Lize pushed him back from her.

"I shall never see him any more!" she cried in a tone of anguish.

"No, you shall be all my own now."

Lize sprang to her feet; her eyes flashed a strange, amberlight upon him.

"I don't love you. I hate you! I know now that I love Dave. I want Dave! I am his wife! I am sorry I kissed you and came to you. Oh, Heaven! Dave, Dave, forgive me! Dave, Dave, I want you!" And freeing herself from his grasp she rushed into the storm.

Foley, working like a madman at his trunk, heard a light step upon the little porch. His heart leapt in a sickening throb as Lize crept into the room and stood trembling by the hearth.

"Well?" he said sternly, through his teeth, "has Langham driven you from him?"

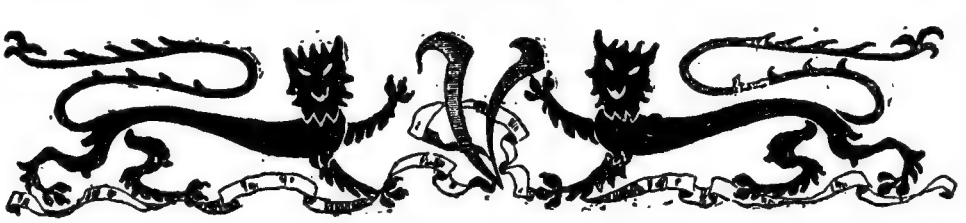
"Dave, Dave! Oh, will you please let me stay with you? I will not ask more; only just to stay with you? I did not know I loved you until to-night. You were not like a lover, Dave. You treated me like a child; and I was a woman, who wanted love and sweet words. I hate him, I told him so, and he tried to keep me back; but I had to come to you. I have been wicked—I let him kiss me!"

Her voice died in her throat. Foley caught her by the arms.

"Yes, it is all my fault. I made a mistake. And I struck you!" he said hoarsely. "Can you forgive that?"

"Oh, yes!" she sobbed, her lips touching his rough hand. Foley caught her in his arms and turned her face towards the lamp. In her eyes he saw the "light that never was on sea or land." In his long, silent kiss the past was buried, and a lovely future dawned for both.

H. T. P.



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The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, falls desperately in love with Ada Seward, an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition.

He goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies.

War is declared between Great Britain and France, Germany and Russia. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman and a genius for modern warfare (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. Yen How organises an army of 400,000,000 souls—men, women, and children—to overrun Europe when the time is ripe. All the Europeans in China are massacred, and when John Hardy gets there he is brought before Yen How, who discovers that the English boy has kissed Ada Seward.

They quarrel, and Hardy fires at the Chinaman, but the bullet strikes a breast-plate of steel and does no harm. John is seized and thrown into prison. Foo-chee loves Ah-lin (they are in the same Chinese regimental company), but the latter is loved by Sin-wan, a warder of the Imperial Prison. Ni-ching-tang is Foo-chee's father (although Sin-wan does not know this), and one of the scullions of Yen How's kitchen. John Hardy is cruelly tortured by Sin-wan, acting under Yen How's instructions. Ni-ching-tang, Foo-chee's father, discovers that Sin-wan has murdered his son and Ah-lin. He then goes in revenge and drugs Sin-wan, and enables John Hardy to escape in a boat to Kiao-Chau. The British warship *Iphigenia*, which escaped from the Japanese ships in the last battle, is run ashore at Kiao-Chau, now occupied by the Chinese. The British take possession of the fort and hold it against the Celestials.

John Hardy arrives at the island, and in due course propounds a scheme for escaping by taking possession of one of the deserted ships in a Chinese port, and manning her with the wrecked sailors of the *Iphigenia*.

CHAPTER XXIII. (*continued*).

"July 4th.—Here we are, every man Jack of us, on board a very smart and spanking little German barque called the *Conrad*, a thing of about 400 tons, and we making straight for Nagasaki, God only knows what for. However, everybody in the best of spirits, and the lads ready for any game. This man Hardy, is, in my opinion, as wild a creature as ever drew the breath of life, and yet it would be a lie if I say that I have not every confidence in his leadership, for I have. The *Conrad* is very high out of the water, and is scudding along before a good stiff breeze from the N.W., with the foam singing past the level of her weather bulwarks, and her deck too steep to walk on without gripping hold of things. She's got nothing in her but ballast, and not too much of that. So away we fly, under all plain sail and courses—a tidy spread of canvas for this light thing—but toward what? I am surprised at the lads: they don't seem to be asking themselves that question. The nineteen who went to Chefoo have got a fine old tale to tell of the capture of the *Conrad*, which they accomplished at about ten at night, without the least trouble. There was nobody aboard of her but an old Chinese woman, and one of those frizzy dogs that the Chinese eat. Not content with the ship and her three boats, Hardy boarded two other ships in the port, and seized three more boats; so that, counting the pinnace, we have got seven boats in all, which is not bad for a little nipper like this. What is troubling me is the thought of provisions; we have not enough to last us another three days at the present rate of going on. The ship is packed with men, and very far from packed with food. It is true, we should be in sight of Nagasaki by sun-down to-morrow, if this breeze lasts. But how in the name of Providence we are to get provisions at Nagasaki, even if we are not blown to the devil by some little Japanese gun-boat, is what I don't see. It isn't that I mistrust Hardy; there can be no doubt that he has a head-piece, and can lead. But I am a prudent man, and this looks to me like the wildest and maddest voyage that ever was made by any crew which ever put to sea.

"July 5th, one p.m.—Breeze continued good during night and all morning. *Conrad* splendid, and twice did twelve knots. Lads looking out confidently for coast before sunset. Hardy having long private talks with Richardson and Lovel, both of whom have been Eastern traders, and say they know Nagasaki harbour well. Everybody getting

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pretty excited, and some saying Hardy ought to speak. I with great weight of fear at my heart, which I can't get rid of.

"July 5th, six p.m.—Good for Hardy! I believe it will work!—though as wild a thing, I suppose, as ever entered into the brain of a man! This day at five, Council. Resolved: that in the event ——"

[Here Murray's diary abruptly ends, and is not resumed till some weeks later. But the account which follows is also due to Murray, though given in a different form.]

Some little time after one bell in the second dog-watch on the 5th July, the *Conrad's* crew sighted the blue coast of Kiûsiu, they at that time being in a very high-wrought state, on account of the announcements made to them by Hardy in the "Council" at five, of which Murray speaks. It may be said, by the way, that Murray (a homely, well-meaning man, far more cautious than enterprising by temperament) fails to give in his diary anything like a fair idea of the enthusiasm with which John Hardy by this time seems to have inspired this crew. As a matter of fact, they now followed him blindly, adoring his audacity, believing in his success, entranced by his personality. Hardy was for them a dazzling angel sent to lead them to vague glories and to indefinite conquests, the precise nature of which did not, for the present, trouble their sailor-brains. When he unfolded his plans at the "Council" on the 5th, they discussed nothing, but hailed with rapture his proposals, eager to use their magnificent training for him, to do and die for him. Even Murray was infected. And at eight o'clock they lay-to behind a small island outside Nagasaki harbour, and waited there.

The moon arose. And everybody looked at her. For in all the creation there was nothing half so interesting to this crew this night as the earth's satellite.

She was at her full, and gravid with light. Up she climbed from the East in peerless, cloudy majesty. At midnight she was nearly overhead, and had then wheeled about her a light, fleecy cloud, prismic with rainbow hues, like Miss Löie Fuller in her serpentine dance. The night was full of shining, and shining was on the calm water.

The crew of the *Conrad* looked at her and swore. John Hardy, sitting among the main-sheet-ropes behind the wheel, looked questioningly at her, and muttered. But the moon did not hear.

It was better to be out at sea among the brisk breezes and the spray. At one o'clock, Hardy gave the order to let go the sheet of the main-jib, and put the helm to lee. The *Conrad* swung round, and went snorting once more to Mother Carey and the central sea.

At ten on the following night she was back at the same spot behind the island, and there she lay-to again. And the sailors watched the moon arise, and saw her climb to her noon, gravid with light, and saw her wheel about her a light cloud, *à la* Löie Fuller. And they swore more than ever.

But this time there was no turning back. It was now or never. Their stores were at an end.

John Hardy said to two men leaning over the bulwarks near him:

"Well, by moonlight, then, lads. It may not turn out to be so bad as we think."

And at about two o'clock in the morning, six boats put off from the *Conrad* and rowed away. Two contained nineteen men each, one twenty, one twenty-two, one twenty-three, and one thirty-three. On board the *Conrad* eight men were left.

At this hour the moon was westering far down the steep slope of her setting course, and all the smooth sea was branded with trails of tremulous silver. The old and drowsing Night, heavy with vigil, was all enkindled now and aglow, instinct with the glamour of the moon-beams absorbed through many a long hour, like an old toper who has imbibed in solitary orgy all the night, and towards morning he rises gorged for bed, drunken, and sighing with surfeit. A flush of pallid gold suffused the fainting air. Yonder, like a lamp which has burnt through all the slow period of the dark, and in the small hours it smoulders red, and gives an odour in the room, so down with troubled visage went the moon. Hardly a breath sighed through the slumbering harbour, and about its dark and silent islets.

The narrow inlet of sea which forms Nagasaki port lies nearly north and south, and is about twelve *go* (three miles) in length. At its mouth, it is only a quarter of a mile broad, and though it spreads out within, it is nowhere of very great breadth. All along its length, however, on both sides, the land opens up into numerous bays of considerable capacity. On the east side the land is mostly flat, and here used to be the "foreign settlement," with a water-frontage of some 700 yards, backed by picturesque slopes on which stood the villa-residences of the rich merchants. On the west side, however, where the moon went down, rose wooded mountain and steep crag. The whole is thoroughly sheltered, and affords anchorage for the biggest ships.

The six boats, furrowing their silent, silvery way, entered the harbour-mouth at the north-west, the largest boat (which contained Hardy, Richardson, and Brassey), leading. Anyone looking at this little fleet would have said that each of the boats contained no more than two men. The rest of their crowding crew were stowed away in the bottoms, and lined the sides, lying mostly at full length, and covered with strips of tarpaulin. Under the tarpaulins, too, were lanterns. The cross-seats, except those used by the rowers, had been removed.

The course lay among a number of islets, with the navigation of which Richardson seemed quite familiar. They passed Kami-no-Shima, the site of a disused gun-battery; and they crossed a stretch of sea, all white and incrusted with moonlight, to Takabok.

From the cliffs of Takabok, two centuries before, thousands of Christians were flung by the Japanese into the sea, because they refused to trample upon the Cross. And after two centuries John Hardy came to Takabok.

Yonder, a little inland, was the burning light of the Iwoshima light-house, and further still, the less brilliant beam of the Kage-no-Shima pharos. Further still, lay Pappenberg, and then Nezumi-Shima, which, in old quiet days was so often used as a pic-nic place by the white residents of Nagasaki.

One by one the islands receded, and the file of daring boats stole nearer and nearer upon the interior of the harbour, now in shadow, now adventuring swiftly across a patch of sea gloating in the dream of moonshine. And now, behind them is the last island, and before them the open basin, and ponderous in black slumber on the basin—the great navy of Japan.

But where are the eyes of the watchmen that they cannot pierce those dark coverings, and divine that there, beneath them, is creeping nearer and nearer an insidious death, a strange retribution? The watchmen, if they see, cannot divine. The riddle of destiny is far beyond them. All droops and faints in slumber—the sea, and the old night, and the moon in her far western couch, and the divining of the watchmen.

Only the best-trained crew in the world, led by the best leader, are awake: and they have sworn an oath.

And, suddenly, a miracle of luck is revealed to them. For yonder all the western half of the harbour is seen to be lying in absolute shadow, while the eastern half is still glittering in aspen corruscations of white light. And the main part of the fleet, it is clear, is lying within that western gloom.

The boats, by signal, separate. Each knows its work—each has its instructions.

They are, in general, to aim at the stars, they are to fly at big game, they are to make for battle-ships.

But each has separate recommendations to fulfil. And to every man is given his place, and his work, according to his powers. The company is organised into captains,

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commanders, lieutenants, as in the big navy at home. Hardy has been minute.

The biggest boat of all, containing thirty-three men, cruises at zig-zag for three or four minutes; and then Hardy sees, and decides. He whispers an order; and the boat—the long-boat of some European four-master—turns directly westward, and enters the recess in the coast-wall which is directly north of the Tetegami dock. Here the water is hardly ruffled by a ripple; and here the blackness

The sword of Brassey is in his breast.

of shadow is absolute. Two points of light only are visible within that gloom—the white mast-light, and the coloured port light of a great ship.

Her massive hull is just discernible, disparting the water with its outward-bulging girth. She conveys a suggestion of such ponderousness, that it looks as though no power on earth could ever move that squat mass an inch through the water. She is the giant of the Japanese navy, the terrible *Hirosaki*, and she has a crew of 576 men.

But they are asleep, and the thirty-three are awake; and yonder to the far eastward, in the broad brand of shimmering and weltering moonshine, is a boat in which some of the harbour police are lolling on their oars, chatting, seeing nothing. And the bull's-eyes of the lighthouses glare steadily, and the watch-lights of the ships glare steadily, and they see nothing.

The oars are muffled, and the boat glides through shadow beneath the poop of the *Hirosaki*, and when a grappling iron steals upward and fixes in a beading of the stern, we may very well say that the British lion is crouching to spring.

Up wriggles Brassey by the pole and gains the cornice, and, immediately afterwards, up wriggles Hardy. And when Hardy gains the cornice, he coughs a little; and Brassey whispers in his ear a long: "Sh-h-h-h."

Yonder, six yards from them, is the officer of the watch, walking to and fro, between the mainmast and the aft nine-incher.

The two lie on their faces, and are hidden by a ridge of bulwark above the cornice. Within reach is a coil of rope, and Brassey's hand steals between an interspace of the taffrail, and with absolute noiselessness draws forth the coil, makes a bowling-knot round one rail, and lowers a rope-end to the boat.

And now the men arrive rapidly. There is plenty of room to receive them. They are like flies climbing an overhanging rampart by a spider's *fil de toile*.

Before the last man is up, three of them have run stooping forward, and the officer drops without a groan. Just then, from for'ard, a man climbs the stair to report to the officer that the three lights are duly burning: it is his half-hourly duty. And as he reaches the topmast rung, the sword of Brassey is in his breast, and he drops.

The upper deck of the *Hirosaki* is a village, five hundred feet long, but an almost deserted village. Just for'ard of the foremost funnel, two men are talking, one leaning against the foremast, one with his hand resting on a boat-davit; and a moment before the sword pierces him, the latter gives a light laugh at a jest of the other; and the other utters a feeble cry, and dies. The upper deck of the *Hirosaki* is an English village.

They descend to the main-deck, to the fo'castles, to the cabins, to the engine-rooms, down even to the turtle-back armour-deck at the water-line, and everywhere, with the silence and the thoroughness of the Angel of the Passover, they smite, they slay. As a man cries out, he dies; he opens his eyes, and they are sightless. The ship flows with blood.

At a door for'ard, Hardy lifts a lantern and looks into a small apartment in which sleep ten men. He shuts the door upon them, secures it, and does not kill. They are the remnant,—the only men left alive,—and he will have need of them.

In the bunkers of the *Hirosaki* are 2,500 tons of coal. The Englishmen are soon crowding in the engine-room.

Five other ships, besides the *Hirosaki*, are already in their hands. But their work is not over. Massacre for massacre—John Hardy's for Yen How's! Each has his Sabbath, and his Passover-night.

Once more the six boats put off from the six captured ships, each containing from five to nine men, all carefully picked and mixed, according to their special knowledge of ship-work; and these, six meet at an agreed spot just opposite the patent slip of the Dock-company. Then three of the boats' crews abandon their boats, stepping over into the other three boats, and these three row away, each containing sixteen men.

And each of them glides beneath the stern of a Japanese war-ship, and the men climb, and kill, and hurry to the engine-rooms.

Down in smoky disaster and eclipse sets the red moon, and the deep dark which precedes the morning covers the silent tragedy.

Three pistol-shots altogether, two in one ship, one in another, have been fired by the Japanese. These shots represent all the struggle which has taken place.

But the darkness which has supervened, almost as suddenly as the flickering-out of an out-worn lamp, cannot prevent the watches on other ships from perceiving that some of the fleet are pouring out an unaccountable smoke from their funnels. They must be lost in amazement, unless they conclude that the ships have received secret orders from the Admiral to sail. But they look on, and do nothing but look—for the Admiral is with the fleet, borne in the *Hirosaki*, and all, they think, is under his eyes.

There is a rattle of chains, and the steam-windlasses are a-clank, and as the first faint hint of day tinges the East, the solid-looking bulk of the *Hirosaki*—moves. And one after another the nine bulks move, wending northwards in file.

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Nine—they are few in number, but they represent a good quarter of Japan's weight in war-ships. And with that quarter, Hardy would then and there attack the other three-quarters, with an inward certainty of beating them, were it not that he lacks one thing—men. The crew of a six-inch quick-firer is five; and five men represent the third part of a complete ship's-crew in this sparsely-manned fleet.

But the sound of cannon is good to the ear of Hardy, and in mere self-indulgence, as the *Hirosaki* steams past the island of Takabok, he sends a 9·2 inch wire-gun shell among the still slumbering fleet. And the startled hills of Nagasaki awake, and cry aloud with many a voice of surprise, and the shell bursts in the engine-room of a cruiser.

The shot is not answered. There is an amazement so profound as to resemble coma. While it lasts action is impossible.

But the amazement of the Japanese navy at being shot at by their own Admiral-ship was, if possible, surpassed by the crews of the three new Chinese cruisers, the *Hi-ti*, *Hi-tien*, and *Hai-wan*, when, three days later, at noon, a fleet of nine Japanese ships proceeded without warning to sink them as they lay at anchor at Shanghai. They made no resistence to this sudden and overwhelming assault; they simply sank.

In each of the nine ships were a few Japanese who, by Hardy's orders, had been spared to do forced labour in working the ships. Being unarmed, they behaved well, and from them was learnt the probable station of the three Chinese cruisers.

The "Hundred and Eighty" (so called) then proceeded southward, and touched at Hong-Kong, intending to take on board all the white men they could find there. But there were no longer any white men at Hong Kong, though there was coal.

Then they turned their bows toward the West, among them being the *Conrad*, with her crew of eight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Frown of England.

By the end of July, one thing at least had been clearly hinted to the whole of Europe: that if those British could not write music, they could work; if they could not make pretty things, they could certainly fight; if they were not "*élégants*," they at least possessed the knack, and the secret, and the sword of the Conqueror.

"*La morgue britannique!*" "*La raideur britannique!*"—it was not, then, after all, a mere insolence of semi-savages, but a pride based on a genuine superiority of national value and valour.

The Continental nations were not quick in learning this fact: a lingering unbelief persisted in them; and in learning it, they perished; and in teaching it to them, Britain herself all but perished.

The numerous campaigns all over the Continent had now occupied not quite five months; and at the end of this time Europe was in a state of collapse and exhaustion far exceeding that which existed at the close of the Thirty Years War.

About a league to the south-west of Liege, in a pine-wood, there stands a small, old-fashioned inn with over-hanging gables, whose frontage looks directly upon the brown waters of the Meuse. Here the Emperor Wilhelm, Duke Paul, representing the Romanoffs, and M. Hanotaux met by appointment.

The first was chiefly a soldier, the second chiefly a diplomat, the third chiefly a man of business.

They sat in one of those vast bedrooms of old Belgian inns, on the first floor, grouped near a window which overlooked the river.

The deliberation was conducted, as usual, in French.

"The situation," said M. Hanotaux "has developed. And developments generally demand new plans. The facts we know: by means of a single *contretemps* to our fleet, France finds herself with two invading armies in her territories, Germany with three, and Russia with three. And in no case has any one of these eight armies been unsuccessful."

"The defensive," said the Emperor, "has always been intensely repugnant to the genius of the German army. It is an army of conquest and aggression. The smallness of its victories in this war has been due to the fact that it fought on German soil."

Duke Paul and M. Hanotaux smiled at each other with their eyes.

"But the question is one of means, rather than of causes," said M. Hanotaux. "Let us face this fact boldly: that our great enemy is aided by the geography of the earth. We should have beaten England—we none of us doubted that we should. But we have not. To me there seems to have been two chief reasons for this failure, which may now be more or less removed: Firstly, the diversions caused by the hostilities entered upon against us by other nations; and secondly, the sea."

"But both reasons remain?" said Duke Paul interrogatively.

"The sea does," broke in Wilhelm, "but, candidly, it is my opinion that France should long ago have made peace with Italy, and Russia with Austria."

"Your Majesty is perhaps a little sanguine in this view," answered M. Hanotaux, "for Italy was the aggressor, and perhaps one might say the same of Austria. On the other hand, Germany seems to have no real cause for a bloody war with Sweden and Denmark."

"But was not Sweden, then, the aggressor, monsieur, as far as Germany was concerned?" asked Wilhelm. "Did she not wantonly attack my coasts for no other valid reason than that Germany was the ally of Russia? And since Denmark has joined Sweden in this unprovoked attack, what would you have? This, be sure, is not a matter for the peace-maker, monsieur, but for the unsparing and implacable sword."

"Still," said M. Hanotaux, and he stroked his straggling *barbiche de bourgeois*, "our conference, conducted in a spirit of unyielding insistence upon rights, will hardly result in good fruit. The fact is that we each of us have to fight one great, and at least one smaller foe. I have inaugurated this meeting for the purpose of asking in the most definite terms this question: Since the resources of Europe are visibly nearing their end, do we prefer to conquer the great foe or the small? Is it wisdom to persist in both attempts?"

"I agree with you in principle," said Wilhelm.

"The principle is obvious," said Duke Paul.

"And to me the details also seem obvious," said M. Hanotaux quietly. "England triumphant over Europe means, of course, the wiping out of the empires of the world—it means a Saxon earth. When I say 'a Saxon earth,' I shudder, Your Majesty—I shudder, M. le Duc Paul,—and you shudder, too. The thought, you will say, is not pretty. And the nations will not permit that? Let us make peace with our brothers, that we may crush the stranger!"

"A League of Europe?" said the Duke.

"A League of Europe," answered M. Hanotaux, and bowed.

Wilhelm flushed with enthusiasm, and he said:

"I agree!—in principle."

"The principle is obvious," put in the Duke.

"And the details, I think!" cried M. Hanotaux.

"Who will make a beginning?"

"If we say—Germany."

"Not Germany!" said the Kaiser.

"Then Russia," said M. Hanotaux.

"Hardly Russia, perhaps," mused Duke Paul. "The heart of the Tsar is set upon the crushing of Sweden, at least——"

"Then France!" exclaimed M. Hanotaux, "since you leave to France this glory."

"You mean that you will accept the conditions demanded by Italy, monsieur?"

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"Yes, Your Majesty!"

"At once?"

"No—not precisely—but soon."

"When?"

"After the next great battle."

"Whatever the result?"

"Yes, M. le Duc Paul."

"But after the next great battle the southern resources of France will, as I understand it, be at an end," said Wilhelm bluntly. "You will be compelled to do what you offer to do."

"Not 'compelled,' perhaps, Your Majesty; for the territorial resources of Italy will be practically at an end also. There remains, however, her—Navy. We have need of it."

As the inwardness of M. Hanotaux's scheme unfolded with these words, it won the whole interest of his two interlocutors. In both the royal and the ducal brains ripened at the same instant this thought: "A Second Invasion of England."

"I follow you with the closest attention, monsieur," said Wilhelm.

"And I also find your reflections of the profoundest interest, monsieur," added the Duke.

"France," proceeded M. Hanotaux, "will adopt this line of conduct under the following conditions: first, she will satisfy the claims of Italy on the understanding, between her and Italy, that Italy becomes the ally of the Allies; and secondly, France demands that the two Allies follow her example, by generally granting the demands of Sweden, Denmark, and Austria, on the understanding that they also become the allies of the Allies against the common foe of Europe."

Wilhelm leapt up.

"The thing is done, monsieur!" he exclaimed.

"It is a question of *when*," said Duke Paul.

"Precisely," said the Kaiser, "it becomes a question of when."

"*When* the next great battle between France and Italy has been fought," answered M. Hanotaux.

"No!" leapt from the mouth of Wilhelm, in a sort of half-suppressed start, and then there was a long pause. The fact was that each desired to fight yet one battle with the enemy with whom it was proposed to make terms, in the hope and belief that the victory would be his, and the terms of peace therefore more advantageous for him.

Duke Paul spoke meditatively; and he said:

"I agree, on the condition that Russia will make no terms with Sweden and Austria until after the next considerable battle with each of these, whether the battle of France with Italy has then occurred or not."

"And the conditions of Germany are identical," said the Kaiser.

"Then there is nothing for it but to shake hands on the compact, Your Majesty, and M. le Duc Paul. It may be observed, however, that your condition, and mine, insures a certain and very considerable reduction of the not large territorial forces now at our disposal. Is there no departure possible from this determination?"

There was no departure. The three men spoke on for about an hour; and as the darkness gathered, they rode away toward Liege, and took train in different directions.

The agreement, often repeated, was this: five battles, one by France, two by Germany, two by Russia; then, if possible, a European peace and League.

Russia would be prepared to hand over to Austria the doubtful legacy of the still warring Balkan States, and all that stretch of fair land from the Golden Horn to Cape Matapan: and she would yield Finland, with an indemnity, to the victorious arms of Sweden; Germany would buy off Sweden and Denmark; France would yield to Italy the Haute Savoy, Avoie, the Alpes Hautes, Basses, and Maritimes, and Var.

For all this large generosity there was a cause, bitterly near home, awfully pressing. The one thing now that could save Europe from England was the necessity imposed upon England to recall her armies to defend her own territory.

For, at last, 100,000 British soldiers occupied all the Seine valley between St. Germain and Argenteuil, and, the headquarters of Lord Roberts and his staff was the Taverne St. Roch near the great *escalier* of St. Germain. A hundred thousand men—a small army when the war began; an immense war-host now. There was no intention of attacking Paris, which required an investing circuit of 125 miles;—but Paris was not France. Normandy already was once more British; the rest of France lay open; and Italy had crossed the Iser.

Germany's plight was hardly less extreme. Her splendid legions had thrown themselves northward in three continuous streams to meet three branches of the same Teutonic race of which she was part. To the west, occupying Schleswig-Holstein and the upper reaches of the Elbe as far as Domitz, Denmark lay encamped; to the east, Sweden had drawn lines of circumvallation by a ring of earthwork forts and Schumann gun-turrets round Breslau, having captured the Breslau-Posen railway; and midway between these two was that brazen-browed, nimble, ever-intruding enemy, who alone had made possible to the others their victories.

Northern Germany, from Hamburg to Tilsit, had been the scene of the worst series of massacres—carnage after carnage—ever witnessed in history; Royal Saxon Corps, famed in military history, Bismarck Cuirassiers, gallant Silesian and West Prussian Corps—paragons of the soldier's hope of attainment—all had been flung, and flung in vain, into the devouring maw of war; still the British came, though in ever-lessening numbers; and still from further and further south marched the precious levies of the Fatherland. Seven of the twenty corps of the Imperial host remained; and of these, two Bavarian brigades were marching upon Naumberg, whence a nondescript army of Socialists, Nihilists, and malcontents had issued from its headquarters a manifesto to the nation, announcing the day of Liberty, and inviting support.

As for Russia, she turned a four-fold face south, south-west, north-west, and inward, and everywhere saw doom. The Army of India, having waited in vain for invasion, crossed the Helmund, annihilated at Merv the still unrecalled remnants of the Russian army of Turkestan, and had now, after a great victory at Novo Tcherkask, reached Kharkov by road, with the Kremlin for its *objectif*. Odessa, Sebastopol, and the Black Sea littoral were British.

One of the divisions of the Austrian army had in a single day disappeared; but another quickly sprang in its place; and this, with its sister army, adopted Moltke's principle of marching separately and fighting together, had, after a strenuous campaign, only surpassed for carnage by the great drama of blood transacting itself in Northern Germany, made Poland an Austrian province, and crossed the sources of the Niemen. Russia was doing doubtful battle in Bulgaria, Turkey, and Asia Minor. The battleships of Sweden were at the mouth of the Neva; and in the heart of Russia itself a deep subterranean muttering, like a presage of universal earthquake and overthrow, was suggested by the mere word "Nihilist."

This, in briefest outline, was the situation on the Continent at the moment of the conference in the wood at Liege. The three nations which had primarily been made the tools of Yen How, regretted now their rashness. They had miscalculated the Lion.

But, suddenly—as if it needed only the conference in the wood to bring them luck—their sky cleared. In the darkest hour of their extremity, they found a Hope, their last.

On two days following, about two weeks after the meeting in the wood, two considerable victories attended the arms of the Allies.

One of these was French: the 14th (or Lyons) Army Corps of 40,000 men met the advancing Italian Army be-

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Won by a flanking movement of Don Cossacks.

tween Burgoin and the left bank of the Rhone, and though outnumbered by ten thousand, gave to Italy an emphatic, and indeed final negative to her long-fought attempt at conquest. And at once the Aurillas brigade of the 13th (Clermont-Ferrand) corps, which was all that was left of it, was ordered southward to cross the Alps and carry the threat of war into the enemy's country, prior to the proposition to Italy of the terms agreed upon between the Allies.

The second victory was Russian, and was gained in a far more momentous conflict over the magnificent British Indian troops, which had gallantly won their way from Quetta almost to the walls of Moscow. On this battle General Dragomiroff, in a great, final bid for victory, had concentrated almost the whole of the remaining forces of his master. It was a mixed combat in which Ural, Orenburg and Transcaspian Cossacks fought with Bengal Lancers, and Turkestan Infantry Brigades with Royal Fusiliers. The battle, from the commencement of which the 90,000 British were greatly outnumbered, was, after five hours' massacre, won by a flanking movement of Don Cossacks. The number of the slain was 160,000.

Great as was the exhaustion in which this dear victory left Russia, the immediate result was a sudden and enormous increase of her prestige. And two things at once happened: first, Sweden, no longer acting in concert with the great arm of England, which was the incentive to her audacity, became anxious to secure by peace her conquests in Northern Russia; and secondly, the Kaiser, knowing that terms would now be offered to Sweden by Russia, became anxious to make terms with Sweden before her hands were freed to direct upon Germany the entire remnant of her forces. In this way it happened that nearly every one of the contending nations were, owing to the results of these two battles, strongly motived toward peace. Nor could Austria resist the pressure of her allies, Italy and Germany, nor the large amenities of Russia south of the Balkans; and in the many-sided treaty signed at Vienna on the 23rd of August, Denmark, too, compelled by the pressure of events, was one of the signatories.

It was now that the long-expected had come at last. Led by the rigour of events, and by the general tendency of long-maturing sentiment, an exhausted Europe had inaugurated a League—as the first preliminary to a renewal of her life—having for its object the destruction of an exhausted Britain.

For Britain, too, was exhausted; and already had lost semblance to that land of free-handed opulence which her sons remembered with sighs. John Bull's girth had thinned.

Yet if photographs at this hour could have been taken of all her people, and the traits of these agglomerated into the expression of a single face, that face would have been the wild and wan and gaunt visage of a Man, on whose brow brooded a fatal frown of indignation and resolve, not to be softened but by death.

The idea of Europe was to hurl itself in its whole banded strength upon this diminished force. And it would be strange if, this time, the island could withstand the continent.

England's navy had, on the whole, done well. Up to the moment of the new League, she still might be said to command the seas. But with the League, even without the practically intact navy of Italy, her supremacy was gone. *With* the navy of Italy, it was twice and thrice obliterated.

The new Allies, indeed, looked forward with certainty to another great naval battle before they could effect their design; but their ultimate passage to England was practically assured.

And Sweden, flushed with victory, contributed an Army Corps; and Russia, freed from invaders, contributed two; and Germany one; and France one; and Austria three; and Denmark two brigades; and Italy two brigades.

The port of debarkation was fixed at Antwerp, whose neutrality thus suffered willing violation, and in the last days of August 360,000 troops, troop-ships, and war-ships were hasting over sea and land to *rendez-vous* upon Antwerp.

England, warned both from the Continent and America, was not in the dark. On the 5th of September, when the great Armada set sail from the Belgian port, her whole available force in ships of war was massed in Portsmouth Harbour, all but ready to sail.

It was on this very day, toward two in the afternoon, that a singular species of duel was taking place between two men at Worthing. It was war *in extremis*, as bitter as, and more breathless in its mad intensity than the great war going forward around them.

One of these men was called Richardson, and the other Atkins. Atkins was excise, with a salary of thirty shillings; Richardson was municipal, and acquainted with rates. His *locale* was the Town Hall, and he earned forty shillings. Both were fairly active young men of twenty-five.

Apart from their steady and respectable employments, each had a species of less reputable avocation, which, however, he pursued with extreme zeal, and, for some reason or other, was proud of. Richardson said that he was "on the staff" of the *Evening News*; and Atkins that he was "on the staff" of the *Sun*.

This only meant that they had agreed to send any local news that might be of interest to those papers.

Now, on this 5th of August, a bit of local news of considerable interest did, in fact, occur. For a strange-looking little craft, which was nothing else than a Maltese *speronare*, had arrived at the pier; and from her had landed a man of uncertain age, who slowly walked up the pier with his eyes on the ground, made his way to Dixon's Commercial Hotel

half-way up the Pier Street, and there disappeared. The rest of the *speronare's* occupants had at once put out to sea again. But it was quite an hour afterwards before either Atkins or Richardson, being employed on their Jekyll affairs, got the least scent of this Hyde matter.

It was Atkins who, at the dinner-hour, first entered Dixon's commercial-room. In the front of Dixon's was announced a "Daily———Ordinary," the two words being separated by a great gap where the word "Shilling," now painted out, had once stood.

As Atkins entered the room, he saw the back of the stranger, who was leaving it by a door which led to the bedrooms above, and he started.

The whole interest of his life was instantly centred upon this man; there was something in his appearance, his dress, which aroused the instinct of the reporter. About the man was the odour of the sea.

At this time, a bit of news was to the people of Britain like rain to the desert. Men often spent their very last half-penny in buying a paper, which they knew could tell them little more than they already knew.

We have said that Atkins was interested at sight of the stranger; but this interest became a passion the moment that, approaching a spread side-table, he saw beside a soiled plate a piece of paper; and on the paper a certain name written at the bottom of a promise-to-pay, together with a London address.

It had happened that the stranger had, to begin with, informed Dixon that he was without a copper in his pockets; and Dixon, after some demur, on the security of a gold ring, an honest face, and a written promise-to-pay, had not only trusted the stranger with a meal and a bed, but had lent him twelve shillings to pay his fare to London that night. The promise-to-pay, he had in a moment of bustle left on the table, and Atkins saw it, and turned to run.

And as he turned to run, lo! Richardson was at the door. And Atkins let his flat hand fall upon the paper, and stood leaning with careless grace.

Richardson, on his way to Dixon's, had heard of the arrival of the stranger, and there was a breath of haste at his lips. He said:

"Hullo! Anything up?"

"Not as I know of. You heard anything?"

"No. Seen the article in to-day's *D.T.*——?"

"No. Why are you so late to-day? I have had dinner ten minutes——"

"What, are you off? It's only——"

"I've got to be. Beastly job on hand——gauging business for Hatley's. See you to-night at the club——"

Atkin's diplomacy was bad, for his walk toward the door, for one thing, was too rapid to be natural; and Richardson had noted his statuesque pose, his rather pale face, and his unmoving hand over the paper. So he had no sooner passed through the door, than Richardson, too, had read; and at once he, too, rushed to the door. But it was locked on the outside.

The thought of summoning slow Mr. Dixon by the bell never even entered his head; he simply flew to the window, dashed up the sash, dropped into the area, and climbed up to the rails on the opposite side by the help of a swinging coal-cellar door.

Yonder, half way down the street, was Atkins, running with all his legs. Richardson, as though life lay before, and death behind, was after him.

Atkins, however, was considerably taller and fleeter, Richardson being inclined to be fat; and the race was clearly the foremost man's, when, suddenly, there appeared from a bye-street, with callous saunter, a policeman about ten yards ahead of Atkins.

And at once Richardson sent forth the impassioned shout of "Stop thief! Stop thief!" many times repeated.

And an instant later Atkins was firmly gripped in the arms of the officer.

"Let me go, Jones, you infernal idiot!" screamed Atkins, "you ought to know better, you *fool!* Can't you guess—Jones—you silly ass——"

But Jones, with zealous sense of duty, maintained his grip on the frantic man, till he saw the accuser mysteriously rush onward past the accused. And he tossed his head with a smile, as he relaxed his hold of Atkins; and he said:

"Oh, well, I suppose it's only one of their little newspaper squabbles——"

Atkins was firmly gripped in the arms of the officer.

So Richardson only reached the telegraph-office about ten seconds before Atkins; and the telegraph-man was engaged to Atkin's sister.

And therefore the *Sun* got its message some five minutes before the *News*; but by some sleight-of-hand, or extra energy, the *News* was not out-done. It reached Piccadilly Circus first, though the *Sun* was first at Holborn; and it was never quite determined to which of the two Finsbury and Tooting owed their gratitude for the news.

On the placards of each the words were the same:

JOHN HARDY
ARRIVED
IN ENGLAND.

(To be continued.)

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Edited by Mrs. ARIA.

Published by C. Arthur Pearson Limited.

Monthly, 1s.; Subscription, 12s. a year, post free.

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READY ON THE 1st OF EVERY MONTH.

BROUGHT HOME.

"Hallo, old man! Can't accept the invitation? Oh, pshaw, you'll regret it! Any number of swell people and pretty girls are to be there, and all the fellows. By the way, have you met the new girl? Country niece of Mrs. Witherbee, I believe. The fellows are raving about her."

"Is she to be at the houseparty, Upton?"

"Should say so! Couldn't get along without her! Good-bye old fellow; must be off. I'm running to the sea-side for the week end. Better change your mind about that invitation."

"Thank you, Upton. I may. Remember me to everyone."

"H'm! Upton's a queer fellow; good-hearted, though. I rather think I shall take his advice. A few days off can do me no harm. Almost five years have passed since I took my last holiday."

"Well, well, Hampton, glad to see you took my advice!" was the greeting he received from Upton. "Girls all inquiring for you. Come and join us."

"Ah, Mrs. Witherbee!"

"Why, Mr. Hampton! I am so glad you have come. We were almost afraid to count upon you."

"Mr. Hampton,—Katherine, my neice, Miss Heyward, —Mr. Hampton."

"I am very pleased to meet you, Miss Heyward."

It was rather a conventional speech, but there was a depth of sincerity in his low voice which gave it a real charm. He wondered where he had seen this beautiful niece of Mrs. Witherbee. Her eyes, her mouth, her regular features, even the graceful outlines of her head and shoulders, seemed familiar.

The rest of the company demanded his attention, and he had to leave Heyward's circle.

The conversation was not very general at dinner that evening. Hampton had taken Miss Heyward to the table, and he was very willing to have his attention absorbed by her. As he gazed at her perfect complexion and clear-cut profile he thought he had never before been so forcibly struck with a woman's beauty; "and yet," he added to himself, "I feel that I have seen her somewhere before."

"Do you enjoy boating, Miss Heyward?" A bright idea came to Hampton.

"I am passionately fond of it, Mr. Hampton. Indeed, it is almost my only pastime at home."

"Then let us arrange a boating party for this evening. Mrs. Fitzsimmons proposed it. There are four small boats available. Whom shall we ask?"

"Let me think—Mr. Upton (Hampton bit his lip) and Miss Cruttendon (it was all right, after all, he thought; she had planned for Upton to take Miss Cruttendon). Mr. James and Miss Carhart, Mr. Harrington and Miss Wycliffe—that will fill the boats will it not, Mr. Hampton?"

She looked up brightly, and counted them off on her dainty fingers.

"Capital! I shall speak to the men immediately after dinner, and tell them whom they are to ask to accompany them. You will favour me, will you not, Miss Heyward?"

"I thank you, Mr. Hampton,"—she glanced charmingly up at him—"but Mr. Upton has already asked me to go with him. Of course, you will take Miss Cruttendon?"

Hampton tried hard to hide his chagrin.

"I am very sorry that Mr. Upton is to be the fortunate one. Yes, I shall be pleased to take Miss Cruttendon, if she has no previous engagement."

As the boats in single file silently rounded the outer point the sound of music floated across the water. Musicians were playing a serenade—an Italian love song, with soft, insinuating cadence. The oars ceased to move and the boats drifted aimlessly on into the shadows.

"Heavenly, Miss Cruttendon, is it not?" Hampton asked, as the music ceased. But his eyes were fixed upon the boat occupied by Miss Heyward and Upton.

"I say, there's a jolly place a little way up, called Satan's ladder, I believe. Let's row up."

They glided up past meadow and woodland. As they rounded a sharp point there came into view a perpendicular wall of rock, towering majestically above the water. Miniature trees shot out from the crevices and tangled vines hung from it in beautiful festoons. Winding up through a natural ravine, rude steps led to the summit.

The boats were secured at the foot of the cliff.

"Let's go up, Miss Heyward."

"Thank you, but I would rather not undertake it."

"Oh, I would love to go, Mr. Upton!" Miss Cruttendon said quickly.

Upton ascended extending a helping hand to Miss Cruttendon. The others followed. Hampton was left alone with Miss Heyward.

"I should love to have undertaken that climb five years ago."

"Do five years, then, make so much difference in a girl's life?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Hampton, or in a man's either. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, sometimes—but it has not made much difference in mine. Five years ago I took my last vacation, and I find myself just as capable of enjoyment now as then."

"And just as ready to fall in love!"

He was taken aback.

"I do not quite understand, Miss Heyward."

There was just a trace of haughtiness in his tone.

"Why, you know, all men are ready to fall in love—and to fall out again."

"Hardly all men, Miss Heyward." his voice was reproachful. "Do you think it altogether fair to make so sweeping an assertion?"

"No, it is not; but have you never been guilty of that, Mr. Hampton?"

"No, Miss Heyward; decidedly no! that very quality I have always regarded in man's character as one of his lowest, meanest traits. For me to love once would be to love always."

"Would be, Mr. Hampton?" she looked shyly up at him.

She leant back wearily against the massive wall of rock, and in contrast to it she seemed so frail, that he longed to protect her, to shield her from the men who had made her doubt.

"Mr. Hampton, some years ago one of my girl friends met a man who swore that he would always be true to

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her. She was but a girl, and blindly trusted him. He was an artist taking a holiday in her village, and acquaintance ripened into something deeper. When the summer was over and he was forced to leave, he kissed her and swore with his lips to hers he would return; and she waited for him with a blind trust.

"Imagine her feelings when, some time ago, she, grown to a woman, met him; and he, not knowing her, showered attention upon her, even attempted to make love to her."

Hampton leant back against the cliff, and, with his oar, traced figures in the sand.

"Do you marvel that she began to distrust men?"

He did not speak and all round them was silence, unbroken save by the muffled laughter of the climbers.

Suddenly he straightened up. He took her hand in his. His arm stole round her waist.

"She shall believe in them hereafter, Kate."

She drew her young form up to its full height and stepped out from the rock. Her resolute head was silhouetted against the silver moon.

"Stop! five years make a great difference in a girl's life, Mr. Hampton."

His hands dropped to his side.

"And in a man's," he muttered.

The others were descending.

"I say, you missed a jolly climb. Glorious view from above. Can't see why they call it Satan's ladder though. Ought to be the golden stairs."

H. T. C.

AN AUCTION EXPERIENCE.

It is one of those drowsy autumn days when the atmosphere seems charged with the hum of busy insect life. I am sole occupant of the principal room of a village inn. Mingling with the universal hum without comes the sound of a monotonous human voice through the open window. It is too far away for me to be able to distinguish it clearly.

The landlord fortunately enters at this moment, and I forthwith seize the opportunity of satisfying my lazy curiosity concerning the distant voice, which has never ceased to murmur monotonously since I entered. The explanation is unexciting. It is only an auctioneer on a neighbouring green—a travelling auctioneer, the landlord informs me, who accomodates any number of persons in the matter of selling.

I stroll leisurely out of the inn, light a cigar, and take the direction whence comes the buzz of voices. Behind a dilapidated house surrounded by a dilapidated wall, I come upon a motley group. I look on in silent amusement now at the auctioneer, who glibly extols the quality of each article in turn, with a fluency and air of conviction quite astonishing, considering that any knowledge of what he offers for sale has probably been derived within the last few hours.

I have stood thus for a good while; it is beginning to grow somewhat slow, and I soon tire of the salesman's monotonous voice, for ever ascending the scale: "12s., 12-6, going at 13—gone!" And so it repeats itself, varied by nods and gesticulations on the part of the audience, and ever culminating in the significant monosyllable.

Just at this state of the proceedings my eye falls on the figure of a girl in my vicinity. I am leaning over a low wall; she is close to me on the other side; her very nearness has caused me to overlook her. She is a lady, evidently, judging from her dress. Her face I cannot see well; it is covered with a long veil edged deeply with crape, so that her features are, to a great extent, hidden from me. She is clad as a widow in deepest mourning attire, with only her hair as a bright redeeming spot from the general sombreness.

When I first observed her, she is leaning wearily against the wall. I feel stirred to compassion. She looks so lonely, so sad. Can I help her, I ask myself? Is there no chance of getting into conversation? I beat about mentally to discover any means by which to meet my end. A glass of water might, and almost certainly would, be considered an officious and unwarranted offer.

I dismissed the idea. But a chair, as a substitute for the comfortless support of the wall—that could surely not be objected to! I hastened away full of new ideas, but find the matter more easily contemplated than achieved. In breathless haste, I finally pounce upon one. It is but a ricketty kitchen one, but what matters it? With it I hurry back elated. Fearful of rebuff, I present my spoil somewhat diffidently to the mysterious stranger. She only looks up surprised, bows, and graciously accepts. I am fascinated—enthralled.

"You—you!" I stammer, inelegantly (it is strange, I never can command fluency when most desirable). "Is there any article you would like me to bid for, for you?"

"Oh, no," she says very softly. "I am seller, not buyer; see, my things are going up."

She speaks so low I have to stoop to catch the words. I suppose it is the effect of some recently sustained grief; I have heard of sorrow subduing people like this.

"You cannot mean it?" I exclaim, astounded at the information. "Well, luckily, I am a buyer."

I feel I have proved equal to the occasion here; other matters must be in keeping. The first article exposed for sale is a small timepiece, a perfect little gem in its way.

"My poor husband's," murmurs my companion, whereupon I procure the article in question, not without a jealous pang at the thought of the former proprietor. I became reckless of consequences, as one after another the articles are knocked down to me, and reckless of the suspicious and curious glances directed towards me. My companion remonstrates with me scarcely above her breath. And soon all the fair stranger's property has been disposed of, and I am the happy possessor.

"Should you," said I, a happy thought striking me as I ruefully ask myself what I am to do with it all, "should you," treading carefully and delicately, "care to select any of these things to take with you? I shall only be too happy, you know."

"Oh, no, no!" she exclaimed, with somewhat of pain in her voice, and yet with a gentle decision; and so I desist.

The sale is over now. As I am turning away it

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occurs to me that, being here, at any rate I may as well dispatch business matters.

"It makes things so much easier," the salesman remarks confidentially, "your having bought up the lot, sir. The party in black," indicating the stranger by a movement of his thumb in her direction and a solemn shake of his head, "requested it quite specially that, as she goes up to London by next train and then abroad, she might receive payment for her articles directly after the sale."

I leave him. Shortly afterwards he moves in the direction of the stranger, and I delay purposely that they may have the opportunity of arranging money matters, and then join her. It is nearly time for the London train, and mine, too, will be due directly. Upon the strength of this, I venture to escort my companion to the station. She is evidently very tired and is silent on the way. She has kept her veil persistently down throughout the close sultry day; to my infinite disgust I see no prospect of its being raised now. As we reach the station I procure a first class ticket and secure an empty carriage. She is really looking very faint; so at the last moment I thrust in my sherry flask in case it may prove of use.

"You are very kind," she falters in a low voice.

Just as I am about to disclaim the charge the train begins to move, and I stand off, raising my hat in farewell. The next moment the mysterious stranger is gone, and with her name yet undiscovered.

The things!—by the way, I had almost forgotten my extensive purchases. The thought is damping, still I have done a philanthropic deed. I have arranged for them to arrive at Bayham next day, thence at the Grange, by porter, to provoke as little notice as possible. So I seek to dismiss them from my thoughts.

* * * * *

The Grange breakfast room is a pleasant change after City chambers; at least, so I find it the morning after my arrival. My father, mother and I make up the breakfast party. My father is enjoying his newspaper and coffee, alternately, and is consequently silent.

"I'm blessed!" exclaims my father, suddenly startling us. "If I ever heard of such a clever trick! Ha, ha!" with a loud laugh, "very good indeed—capital!"

My mother raises her meek eyes in mild curiosity.

"You've heard of Ramforth, of course," pursues my father, "the notorious London thief? Well," he continued, "Lady Broadford's house has been broken into during her absence, and articles abstracted to the value of a pretty round sum. How do you think the audacious rascal has disposed of them—in London? Oh, no, he was too well looked after there; but there happened to be a travelling auctioneer at Fairly, who, all unsuspecting, served his turn admirably. Such things as plate, of course, he reserved; that would have been dangerous, but valuable articles of various sorts were all easily disposed of here.

"But that is not the point yet," as an expression of surprise escaped my mother, "that is not all the audacity of the fellow! He was there himself, got up as an interesting young widow, attracted a wealthy lord, or baronet, or something of the kind, who happened to be there, got him over quite head and ears with her charms, got him to buy up the stock, intact, in the heat of his juvenile passion! Didn't stop there, but was escorted by the young idiot to the station at the close of the proceedings, and seen off to London. Oh, the precious young idiot!" exclaims my father, with a laugh that seems to me almost diabolical. "I've not heard of anything so good for a long time. The infatuated ass!" and here follow a chuckle.

I am unable to describe my frame of mind at the close of my father's graphic recital. Of course I did not occur to him in connection with the story. I am a true Englishman. I abhor the idea of the impending ridicule I shall have to undergo. Can nothing be done to avert it? I experience a horrible revulsion of feeling when I realise that at any moment the porter may appear in sight, bearing my hated purchases.

I retire from the breakfast room precipitately, and pace the library in bitter mortification of spirit. I realise at last how thoroughly I have been imposed upon. With a fresh significance, yesterday's scene rises before me. Like a flash of lightning I recall the figure, too tall for a woman's—the flaxen hair, unnaturally fair, the soft, almost inaudible voice, always suspiciously lowered, the close and persistent veiling despite the oppression of the day.

I recall it with a sharp pang.

I have already occupied some time in like cheering ruminations, when wheels sound on the gravel, and I rush hastily to the window. It is a carriage, an open one, containing, of all undesirable people, the most undesirable—Mrs. Seymour and her daughter Laura.

At this somewhat late stage in my narrative, and in a mere parenthesis, I must explain that Laura and I are supposed to have a mutual liking for one another; which mutual liking, being zealously fostered by the different members, of both our families, promises fair to develop into something more serious. Their appearance at this most unfortunate moment proves for me the proverbial "last straw." I sink into a chair and try to arrange my thoughts. If my eyes do not belie me, I can distinguish some kind of a light vehicle in the distance. It must be my ill-fated purchases. I have the feeling of a leaden weight tugging at the region of my heart. At this moment a servant appears announcing the arrival of Mr. Smith.

I quit my station at the window, and stumble downstairs to my father's private room. A small, square man occupies the chair facing my relative, who regards me as I enter with a kind of withering scorn, just such a look as I have been picturing to myself.

"You are probably acquainted with Mr. Smith's business?" he remarks with sarcastic interrogation.

I forbear from a reply, unable to make a civil one. Mr. Smith hereupon enters into fluent details, the drift of which I take to be that all the "rubbish" as my father elegantly phrases it, which I had yesterday collected so ingeniously, must be transferred this very day to its rightful owner, who I understand to be Lady Broadford. I do not wait further than to learn what is required of me, but as soon as possible beat a hasty retreat.

Luncheon hour is approaching. A little behind time I cross the hall on my way to the dining room. I am late; I can distinguish voices and laughter through the closed door. I halt for a second. Can I believe my ears? My father is actually rehearsing the whole story, if one might judge from sounds, to an appreciative audience! At this moment his sudden demise would almost be grateful to me. My hand trembles on the door handle; but it is now or never, so I push it open and enter.

To this day my reminiscences of that luncheon are hazy. Suffice it to say that Laura behaved magnanimously throughout, and now that we are married, never reminds me of my first auction experience—need I ask it?—also my last.

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A TALE OF OLD FRANCE.

By MARY FERMOR.

SUMMARY.

Amaury Montruel, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maitre Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone. Returning from the visit to the cathedral, the members of the Royal party are intercepted by the Free-Lances, but are finally allowed to go on their way. Thinking this wild crew may be of future use to her, Agnes de Méranie determines to enlist the sympathies of their leader, Antoine Cadocu. To accomplish her object she visits him the same evening, accompanied by Montruel, in the low tavern in which he and his followers hold their nightly revels. She is very rudely treated, and returns with Montruel without having attained her object of enlisting the sympathies of Cadocu. Montruel's secretary, Samson, hints to the King that Agnes has been seen out late at night, and, although he confirms his suspicions, he does not allow Agnes to suspect his knowledge. During the sitting of a council appointed by the Pope to decide which of the King's two wives is his lawful consort, Montruel visits Mahmoud-el-Reis to urge him to fulfil his promise to murder Ingeburge without delay. In order to gain access to the Queen's presence, the two men arrange that Mahmoud shall feign sickness and be taken to the hospital attached to the Abbey, where the Queen is confined. Eric, being at work on the cathedral as a mason, overhears the plot and determines to save Ingeburge. Meanwhile the Saracen partakes of a drug which renders him unconscious, is conveyed to the Abbey by Montruel, and ministered to by the Queen herself. She is heavily veiled, and Mahmoud is unaware of her identity.

CHAPTER XV.

The Veil Lifted.

By a curious coincidence the Syrian said to Ingeburge at this moment:

"Maiden, if you will help me to have speech with the Queen alone, you shall have this purse of gold."

These words came in confirmation of her worst fears, and with the tears starting from her eyes she said tremulously:

"And you come from the King? It was his name that opened these doors to you?"

She knew she was an obstacle in his path, and the thought that he had sent this man to put an end to her young life, the idea that her lord and husband wanted to kill her that the man upon whom she had lavished such a wealth of love should only desire to be rid of her, tortured her far more than the mere dread of death itself. No thought of blame rested on the King in her generous heart, she was crushed by the sense that she had been found unworthy of his love: it was her duty to bow before the inscrutable will of the man to whom she had pledged her faith. It was better perhaps, that she should die, life held but little to attract her, save the faint hope that one day she might take her lawful place by her husband's side.

Eve's story was so confused in her mind, that she had no doubt about this dark, mysterious man being the assassin paid by Philip Augustus, to kill his unwanted wife.

Mahmoud-el-Reis, far from guessing who she was, and unable to see the workings of her face, was quite at a loss to account for her evident emotion, but he drew a bow at venture, and the arrow went home.

"Yes," he answered, "I come from the King."

"And the King gave you that purse?"

"Yes, the King himself."

"To bribe some poor soul to sell you the Queen's life, I suppose?" she continued, breathlessly awaiting his reply.

"You have guessed exactly."

Ingeburge gave a long low moan and fell back senseless.

* * * * * *

The Syrian sprang from his couch, and knelt beside the prostrate Queen. He raised her veil and gazed with rapture on the pale, noble features, the fair neck round which soft little curls of golden hair were clustering lovingly, and the dark-fringed lids which concealed the eyes that he knew must be blue. It was his own statue in flesh and blood; He gave a low, wondering cry of delight, and passed his hand over his eyes to make sure that he had not fallen again into some feverish dream.

"Dilah!" he crooned caressingly, "Dilah! Is it not the same supple form, the same dear features, and broad, low brow, the same sweet sadness about the lips! Dilah! as she would have been born under the pale northern skies, with the golden sunlight in her hair and the blue of Heaven in her eyes!"

He bent down and kissed the white brow with lips and heart as pure as those of a man who kisses his dead child, murmuring:

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"Dilah, my beloved, I greet thee! I will love and guard thy twin soul!"

The minutes passed, and the Abbey was wrapped in sleep, save for a few silent watchers like himself, and the moonlit garden lay deserted beneath the old grey walls; but far away in the city there raged a tumult and the sound penetrated now and again as far as the Abbey St. Martin, but the Syrian heeded nothing while he looked on the still unconscious form beside him. He had placed his pillow beneath her head and moistened her lips and brow with water. Now he was kneeling with bowed head and clasped hands as a devotee at the shrine of his divinity, awaiting her return to life.

It came at last, and he gently passed his hand under the pillow to raise her slowly. She opened her eyes and looked round with that half-vacant, inquiring glance that marks the mind's return from a state of oblivion.

"I have been dreaming," she whispered faintly. "Where are you, Eve, my sister?"

"The very voice is the same," thought Mahmoud, and tears dimmed the eyes of this hardy son of the desert for a moment. All his fierceness, all his fanatic pursuit of blood were forgotten in the memory of the woman he loved so fondly.

When Ingeburge's eyes rested on the dark face, with its almost adoring expression, she shuddered and raised her hands to shut out the painful sight, moaning:

"Ah, it was no dream! The assassin! The assassin!"

A look of pain crossed the Syrian's face and he said gently:

"Madame, as you seem to love the Queen so dearly, she shall be guarded from all ill. Do not tremble so, the mere sight of your face has made me your slave. Yet, do not mistake, there is no love in my heart for you, maiden, my words need bring no blush to your fair cheeks. I would protect you and your Queen as a man shields a dear sister or his own child."

As her fears seemed in no way to diminish, he added, with one of his rare, grave smiles.

He bent down and kissed the white brow.

"What do you fear from me? Just now you were lying there at my mercy!"

This was one of those simple, lucid arguments, that never fail to bring conviction even to the most confused brain, and her face cleared.

"That is true, he might have killed me then!" she thought, and the change in his voice went far to reassure her. It had lost all the suppressed fierceness, the cold, cruel tone in which he had bartered for her blood had vanished, and he spoke in respectful tenderness.

Ingeburge was little versed in the ways of the world, she had a sweet, sunny nature that was quick to think well of others, and her sad experiences had made her very susceptible to any kindness, so she smiled in return and asked timidly:

"What had the Queen done to you? And why were you chosen to carry out the King's cruel intentions?"

"I deceived you, maiden, but now that I have seen your face, I can deceive you no more, I would rather die. It was not by the *King's* orders that I was to kill the Queen!"

She clasped her hands on her breast and raised her eyes to Heaven as her heart went out in deep thankfulness to God. Again she looked eagerly at the Syrian's face, for it seemed to her as that of a stranger, so completely had love and tenderness transformed it.

"Thank you," she said at last, "you cannot know what joy your words give me, my brother."

"*Your brother!*" he repeated thoughtfully, as if this term used in Christian charity to the sick and suffering, had gained a new significance for him.

"But," persisted Ingeburge, "if you did not come by the King's command, why did you want to assassinate the Queen?"

"That would be a long story to tell you, maiden," answered the Moslem in a sad tone, "and you would not understand me, for you and I have neither the same manners nor the same faith."

"What?" cried Ingeburge, "are you not a Christian?"

Mahmoud-el-Reis rose to his full height, and folding his arms across his breast, replied solemly:

"There is but one God, Who is God, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

Ingeburge started as if she had been stung, and shrank back into the farthest corner of the cell as if to escape contamination from any further contact with the man who had confessed to be what her faith taught her to regard as a child of Satan.

"Ah, I knew you would shrink from me with abhorrence," he said in a voice of infinite pathos, "but I told you the truth because I had seen your face, and it is the face of Dilah, my beloved—so I could not deceive you, even at the risk of losing your regard."

The Queen listened to the Moslem with growing wonder and decreasing repugnance. She had never heard that sweet sounding name of Dilah, and yet it seemed to strike some chord of memory in her breast, as of one loved and lost in a past stage of existence.

The poetic Eastern belief that each soul has its twin, which shares every joy and sorrow, even though their bodily presence may be wholly unknown to each other, would account for the inexplicable change of mood, entirely independent of our surroundings, which all of us know so well. It would explain the indefinable sense of sadness when all is bright around us, and the joy in the mere fact of being alive, and able to draw in our breath, which cheers us when outward circumstances have not altered very materially. Latter-day cynics and men of science would tell us it all depended on the state of our digestion, and so it probably does, but there may be more in the pretty fancy than we deem.

Mahmoud had sunk into one of his reveries, but he roused himself and asked gravely:

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"Maiden, do you love?"

In any other stranger such a question would have seemed to her as the height of idle curiosity, but this man, in spite of his confession, still dominated her strangely.

"Yes, I do love."

"Do you love ardently? Do you love passionately?"

"Yes," she replied again, her large blue eyes dilating as she spoke, "I love ardently, I love passionately."

"So that you would die for the man you had chosen?"

"Die! yes, a thousand deaths, were it possible to save m."

"Then he is happy," said the Syrian, as if thinking aloud.

Poor Ingeburge bent her head to hide the tears that came welling to her eyes at the thought that the one upon whom all this love was bestowed only requited it by coldness and neglect.

"I wanted to kill the Queen," he resumed, "because a man said to me, 'I will give you the life of the King in exchange for that of the Queen.'"

Again a flash of light seemed to cross Ingeburge's memory, and the tangled skein of Eve's story began to unravel itself before her mind's eyes with distracting clearness.

"Mad, wicked, that I was!" she cried, "to have suspected for one moment that the noble heart of Philip Augustus could be capable of so base a crime! That man wanted to kill the King himself!"

She stopped, and paused as if trying to recall a name, that of the other assassin who had figured in Eve's narrative.

"Amaury Montruel—" began Mahmoud.

"Yes! that's the name, that's it!" interrupted Ingeburge; "He's the one who wanted to kill me, Eve said so!"

"To kill *you?*" echoed the Moslem, in surprise.

"To kill me, the Queen of France."

He was silent for some moments, during which time a fierce struggle raged in his breast, between the implacable fanaticism of his creed and the tender chivalry of his love.

"The Queen!" he repeated, and his dark eyes fell before the calm dignity of her gaze.

"Yes, the Queen," cried Ingeburge passionately, "and I say the same words to you as did that traitor. I will give you the Queen's life in exchange for that of the King! I tell you——" She broke off, her voice was choked with sobs, and she knelt before him with clasped hands and tear-dimmed eyes pleading for the life of her beloved.

"I tell you again, take the Queen's life in exchange for that of the King!"

With a convulsive movement of her little hands she parted the neck of her dress as if to lay bare her breast to the assassin's knife; but the Moslem never raised his downcast eyes, and only murmured:

"You love, in very deed, but you love too well, for you are not loved in return."

"I ask for death and you only torture me!" she moaned.

"I am beloved," continued the Moslem with some return of his old hauteur, "I am beloved, and she whom my soul loves awaits my coming, but before this cruel separation that wounds both our hearts can have an end, I must kneel at my master's feet and show him this dagger's point crimsoned with the blood of Philip Augustus!"

He had drawn out the crystal poniard, and now held it above his head, where the rays from the lamp fell upon it, and made it sparkle like a thousand gems. Ingeburge's brain reeled with horror as he concluded:

"That is why I sought to kill the Queen."

Silence followed, only broken by the low moaning sobs that Ingeburge could not repress, and far away boomed the hoarse roar that had been faintly heard before. Now for the first time the Syrian became aware of it. It was increasing, it seemed to be coming nearer, and for a moment he listened attentively, but soon turned away with a gesture of indifference.

"It has nothing to do with me," he thought.

Had it nothing to do with him? Perhaps it had more than he surmised; a few hours would show.

Parted the neck of her dress as if to lay bare her breast to the assassin's knife.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Light in the Tower.

Eric had lingered in the vicinity of the Abbey till nightfall. Three times he had sought admittance at the gate, only to be sternly refused; but he was nothing daunted for his was one of those slow, strong natures, without brilliant ideas, but possessed of that dogged determination and boundless patience which usually win in the end.

It had taken many long months to reach the land where his beloved Princess was in captivity and disgrace, but he had never lost heart. He seemed to live to protect those two foster sisters, whose destinies were linked by a mysterious chain, and though he did not underrate his own weakness, his will was strong and his heart bold to die for them if needs be.

He knew the Syrian assassin had been admitted to the Abbey, and was therefore under the same roof as the Queen, but he also knew that it would also take some hours for the death-like effects of the marvellous drug to work off, and that until the man regained consciousness, Ingeburge was safe. Another respite would be afforded by the difficulty that the patient would find in getting to any other part of the Abbey from the hospital, as Eric knew from personal experience. He had been laid up more than once in the infirmary of a religious house, from accident and other maladies consequent on his dangerous trade, and it had always proved next to impossible to have any communication with the interior of the monastery.

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Then, shading his eyes, he looked again.

He therefore waited for the friendly darkness in a fairly calm state of mind; but the hours dragged heavily and his ever-present anxiety for Eve's safety weighed upon his spirits and blunted his perceptions. His only idea was to climb the outer wall as soon as it should be safe for him to attempt it, and after that his mind was a blank. If only Eve had been with him! Where was she? and why had the King wanted to see "Little Adam," who mixed the mortar for his brother? No answer was forthcoming to these perplexing questions, and his heart-strings tightened as the dreadful thought crossed his mind—"Perhaps I shall never see her again!"

At last the sun sank beneath the horizon, and about the time when Ingeburge was taking up her post by the assassin's bed-side, Eric crept into the thickest of the bushes and took up his post close to the ivy-covered walls, under a large oak through whose branches he could see the dark towers of the Abbey.

Behind those grim, fortress-like walls, he knew that his Queen Angel was a captive, and he scanned every window, wondering if any that he could see lighted the prison chamber of his royal mistress.

Would the darkness never come? He longed to scale the walls and so remove one barrier, at least, from between them.

At the farthest extremity of the Abbey he noticed a small tower, which was still bathed in the crimson afterglow that lighted up the little casements till they shone like patches of fire against the grey masonry.

"Perhaps she lives there!" he mused. "Our poor sister Angel, cut off from all that she holds dear!"

At this moment one of the windows was pushed open and a woman, dressed in white, leant out and looked round on the peaceful evening scene. Eric sprang to his feet, and climbing one of the lower branches, sought to gain a better view of the figure. He could not distinguish more than the general outline, but that seemed familiar, and he murmured under his breath:

"It's the Queen herself!"

Then, shading his eyes, which were dazzled by the glow, he looked again, long and eagerly, straining every nerve to read those far-off features. Something in the turn of the head made his heart beat faster, and his breath came in quick, short gasps as he thought:

"No, it's Eve! my little sister Eve! Ah, if only it might be so!"

The light faded, and the figure became indistinct, merged in the haze of the deepening twilight.

"It can't have been Eve! I must have been mistaken, for how could she have got there? My eyes seem to see her everywhere since I lost her," said the poor fellow sadly to himself.

He resumed his seat on the grass and continued his mournful reflections for some minutes, then a sound of music reached his ear, and he fancied he caught the strains of the old Masonic choral sung in a girl's clear young voice; but the wind carried the sounds away and the stillness was unbroken save for the distant buzz of the city.

He kept his eyes fixed on the tower, and as it grew darker he saw a light kindled in the casement upon which his attention was rivetted, so he determined to take this as a guiding star when he had entered the precincts of the Abbey.

Noiselessly he climbed the high wall and let himself down in the deserted garden. The maze of winding paths and close-cut hedges gave him a sense of utter bewilderment at first, but he kept the friendly light in view and crept along under the shade of the trees, making many circuitous turns to evade the danger of being seen from the windows.

Within the Abbey he could hear, from, time to time, the measured footsteps of the monks, and at intervals there rose the solemn chanting from the choir of the chapel.

Suddenly he stopped behind a

Eric threw up his hands, and gave a stifled cry of despair.

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large shrub and knelt down with his ear to the ground. The buzz of the city was increasing, it grew louder and louder, and the very ground seemed to tremble under the tramp of many feet.

"I wonder what that is?" thought Eric. "Perhaps the King is marching with his army against John of England, who they say has invaded his dominions. I wish he might get killed!"

With this very excusable, if not Christian, desire, he rose, and began to grope his way forward again, and after much difficulty he found himself beneath the tower. He carefully examined its position and the chances of being able to effect an entrance, but to his sorrow, he discovered that, even to an intrepid climber like himself, it would be impossible. There was a door opening into the garden, but it was heavily clamped with iron and studded with huge nails. Nothing less than a battering-ram would have forced an entrance there.

The utter hopelessness of his position for a moment nearly took away his courage, but he looked up at the still-lighted casement as if for inspiration.

"If only Eve were here, she would suggest something! She has always a clear head and a quick eye!"

A shadow crossed the window, and then he heard again the same sweet voice that had come to him under the trees an hour ago.

The old familiar words that had directed them out of their darkness and distress on the night of their arrival in Paris, now floated above his head, and, as on the previous occasion, he took up the answering refrain.

At first his notes were weak and quavering, but after the first few bars his voice gained strength, and before he had finished the verse it was certainly powerful enough to reach the singer above him. No answer came. The voice in the tower had ceased, and the shadow disappeared.

"Eve!" he called recklessly, "don't you hear me? Eve, my sister Eve?"

He saw the light extinguished, and still there was no sign in response to his passionate appeal.

"Eve, Eve, it's Eric, your brother!" he called louder.

"Silence!" whispered a voice which seemed to pierce the impenetrable door.

Then he noticed for the first time a small loop-hole above his head, and the next moment the massive door swung slowly on its hinges and his little sister was clasped in his loving arms.

For some seconds neither could find words to express their joy at this unlooked for re-union; but Eric, knowing that every moment was now precious if they were to avert the threatened danger from the Queen, asked quickly:

"Where's Queen Angel?"

"Oh, our dear sister Angel is as good and sweet as ever. She has just obtained leave to go and nurse one of the sick men in the hospital."

Eve did not notice at first what an effect her words had upon her brother, and continued merrily:

"But how did you get in? And how did you know I was here? Have you seen the page Albret?" At the last name her cheek flushed slightly, but as Eric made her no answer, she looked hard at him and saw in the dusk that his face was stern and set, his eyes dilated with horror, and as she seized his hand, she felt it was cold and trembling.

"Eric, dear, what is the matter?" she cried anxiously.

"Tell me, was this sick man brought here to-day?" he asked, regardless of her questions.

"Yes; but what has he to do with you?"

"At what time?"

"About twelve, I think."

"And how long has the Queen been with him?"

"Oh, more than an hour now."

Eric threw up his hands and gave a stifled cry of despair.

"Heaven have mercy on her—Heaven help us all!" he repeated wildly.

Eve put her arms round him, for he staggered and would have fallen. The long strain of watching and waiting with this terrible load upon his mind, coupled with the fact that he had taken nothing since his early breakfast, which had been of the most frugal kind, had proved almost too much for him.

Eve tried to persuade him to sit down on the grass, but he refused, and propping himself up against the door, he gasped:

"Do you know the name of the man whom the Queen is nursing?"

Some of his fear had communicated itself to Eve, for her voice trembled as she whispered:

"Tell me!"

"He is called Mahmoud-el-Reis, and the traitor Amaury Montruel has promised to give the King's life into his hands so soon as Queen Angel has fallen under his dagger!"

Eve's face blanched, and she had to steady herself by the wall as she cried:

"But how do you know all this? The man looked like one dead they tell me, when he was carried in here."

In a few hurried words Eric told his sister of what he had witnessed that morning, and how he had helped to carry the Syrian from the city, in the hope of warning Ingeburge of her awful danger.

"The only thing we can do is to seek Prior Anselm," said Eve at last, "he will do all he can to help and shield our dear Angel."

"There is no time to be lost," said Eric quickly.

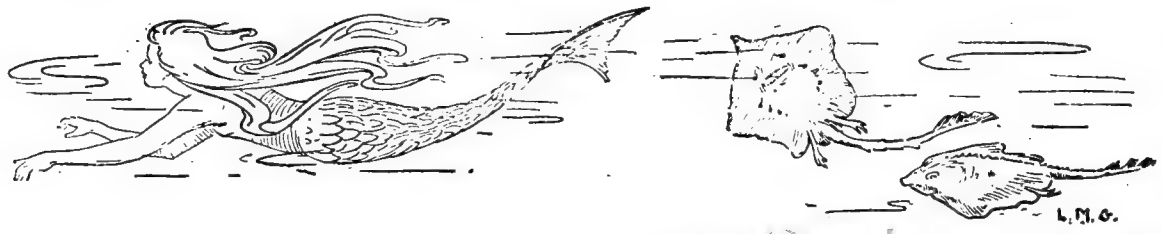
"No, I will send to him at once, but I must hide you in the Queen's rooms till I have permission to take you to the Prior, or else the lay brothers and the guards would turn you out again."

So saying, she drew him inside the door and closed it gently. Then they mounted the dark spiral staircase, and, after putting her brother in a place of security, Eve went off to gain an interview with good Prior Anselm.

It needed all her tact and ready wit to prevail upon one of the sleepy monks who was keeping watch in the chapel to go and tell the Prior that he was wanted on a matter of vital importance, but at last she gained her way, and in a few minutes, Eric was summoned to the presence of Anselm.

Meanwhile Ingeburge's life was in the hand of the Syrian fanatic, and the tumultuous sounds from the city were approaching with every passing minute. Those in the Abbey were too engrossed to notice them, or failed to discover any personal import in them, yet that swelling roar was to affect the destinies of more than one of those who passed it by unheeded.

(To be continued.)



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A. D.—Millions of old corks are found in the Thames annually. They are sold for different purposes. Some are said to be used for packing between the plates of iron ships.

Bunny.—There is an immense rabbit warren in Norfolk, where the visitors may see, on fine evenings in the warm weather, hundreds of rabbits running in and out of their burrows. The lessee of the warren makes about £600 a year out of it. He drives the rabbits out of the burrows by means of paraffin oil, and he has to pay something like £200 a year for the oil and labour.

S. N.—The "White General" was the Russian General Skobeloff, who distinguished himself in the war with Turkey twenty years ago, and was the hero not only of the army but also of the people generally. He was supposed to have died some time ago, but there is a wide-spread belief in Russia that he is not dead. Many people are of opinion that he took part in the late war between China and Japan. The exact reason for the deception, if it be a deception, is not known; but strange things happen in the empire of the Tsar. Three or four years ago, for instance, there was a report—backed by good evidence—that a former Tsar had not died as stated to the world, but had abdicated and retired to a country house far in the interior, where he ended his days.

L. C.—The first regular effort to instruct the deaf and dumb was made by Pedro de Ponce, a Spanish monk, in 1570.

Country Maiden writes: "According to reports I have heard, there seem to be no birds in London but a few smutty sparrows. Is this so?"———Gracious, no. There is plenty of bird life to be found without moving more than a mile or two from the heart of the metropolis. Many of the London gardens possess rookeries, nearly every London square and garden has its starlings, and every spring wood pigeons come to these same gardens. Nightingales may be heard four miles in any direction from Charing Cross, and the Tower of London is quite a favourite nesting place for jackdaws.

Martha would like to know what is the difference between black and white pepper, and if they are products of different plants?———Black and white pepper both come from the same shrub, and the only difference between them is that with the latter the berries are stripped of their outer skin or covering before being ground, and retained in the former.

Rowan Ash asks what I consider to be the world's favourite colour?———There is a regard for things red all the world over. This colour was once held sacred to Thor, the God of Lightning; and Grimm suggests that the robin has probably been singled out for reverence on account of its red breast. Highland women tie a piece of red worsted thread to their cows' tails before turning them out to grass for the first time in the spring to protect them from the evil eye. In China something red is tied round children's wrists as a safeguard against evil spirits, and in that country red holds a prominent place in all religious and social ceremonies.

Sailor.—The title "Admiral" is derived by some authorities from the word *amir* or *emir*, a chief. In the sense of a naval commander it was introduced into Europe by the Venetians in the fourteenth century.

Malcolm.—Yes, it is a fact that both the first and the last stand of the Confederates in the American Civil War took place on land owned by the same man. A part of the Bull Run battlefield was the property of Mr. McLean; after that battle, he decided to move to some spot where there would not be so much risk of suffering from the ravages of war. He took up his abode at Appomattox, which, by a strange coincidence, proved to be the final battlefield of the Civil War.

"Do we get thinner in the summer?" is the question put by S. R. T.———No; on the contrary the human frame has a tendency to increase in weight during the summer, and to waste in the winter. This fact is the result of experiments by an eminent doctor upon 4,000 criminals.

Having heard that tea tasters are well paid, Apollo would like to become one. He has also heard, however, that it is extremely injurious to the health, and writes to ask if this is the case.———No. The tasting operation has been practically eliminated in all but the name, tea being now tested by sight and smell. Boiling water is first poured on an accurately-measured portion of the leaves. In a few minutes the liquid shows some tint of green or brown, and the length of this time and the shade of the colour produced are important elements in the test. The tester then inhales the rising steam from the mixture. This is called "getting the aroma," and is the most important part of the test.

L.—Yes. Liverpool was made an independent port as long ago as 1338. In 1672 the income from the estates of the Corporation was about £13; it is now as many millions.

Inquisitive asks: "Has any monarch laid claim to the greater part of Europe? I mean in historic times. Napoleon I. seemed to have had a good slice of it, but I don't think he ever included this country."———The former Kings of Sardinia laid claim to a tolerably large portion, judging from their description of themselves. It was "King of Sardinia, of France, Spain and England, of Italy and Jerusalem, of Greece and Alexandria, of Hamburg and Sicily." To this they added a few more modest titles, such as "Master of the Deep." But, in the words of the poet, where is that party now?

T. C. asks: "Which wind is the most prevalent in England?"———The south-west; it blows on almost twice as many days in the year as any other wind.

Carpenter.—In times past, Greek and Roman doors opened outwards, and when a man was about to go from the house into the street he knocked on the door so that he should not hurt anyone who might be passing.

Cricket writes: "Has anyone ever stood on the cross of St. Paul's? I think I have 'stumped' you this time."———Not out! About twenty-five years ago, when the cathedral was undergoing repair, one of the men stood on the cross and gazed round with apparent unconcern. At the coronation of Queen Mary a Dutchman named Peter "stood on the weathercocke of Paule's steeple," and performed various antics "to the great marvell of all people." He had two scaffolds under him—one above the cross and another over the ball of the cross, each bedecked with streamers. The torches on the scaffolds "could not burne, the wind was so great." The city paid him sixteen pounds thirteen shillings for the performance.

C. C.—There are only twenty-seven wooden ships in the Navy at the present time.

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2	9 0 by 7 6		7/0	11/9
3	9 0 by 9 0		8/6	13/6
4	10 6 by 7 6		8/9	13/9
5	10 6 by 9 0		10/0	15/6
6	12 0 by 9 0		11/6	18/0

Lot 60. No.	SIZES and PRICES. ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
7	12 0 by 10 6		13/6	20/6
8	13 6 by 10 6		15/3	24/0
9	12 0 by 12 0		15/3	24/0
10	13 6 by 12 0		17/0	27/0
11	15 0 by 12 0		19/0	32/0
12	18 0 by 12 0		22/9	36/0

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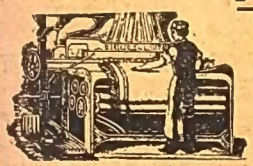

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